journey

The Christian News Magazine of the
Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

MCC PASTOR MURDERED

FROM PULPIT TO POLITICS
(Harry Britt's Journey of Faith)

KKK VISITS MCC

INVESTIGATED By The VATICAN

WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

LUTHERAN INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE GUIDELINES

EASTERTIDE 1986

Christ is Risen Indeed!

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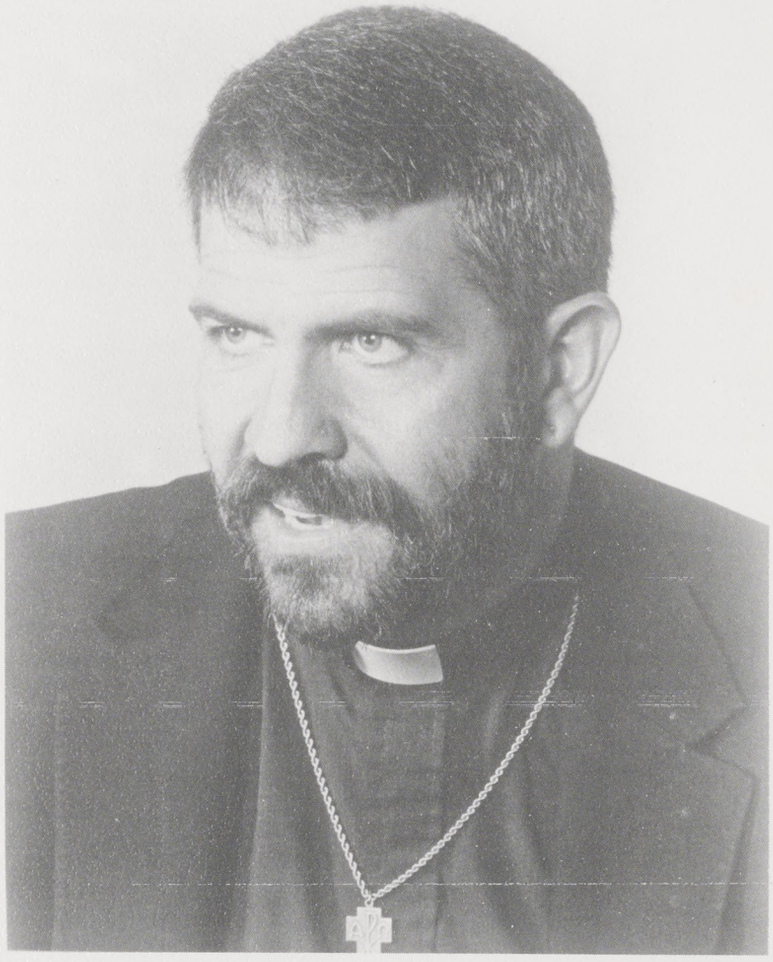
A Message from the Reverend Elder Troy Perry



This last month everyone in our fellowship offices was shocked when we received the telephone call that the Reverend Virgil Scott, Pastor of Metropolitan Community Church Stockton, California, had been found murdered (the story is reported on pages 9 and 10 in Journey so I will not repeat it here).

I will tell you that Virgil was a personal friend who loved this denomination and knew, as most of the clergy in the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches do, that he might be called on to make the ultimate sacrifice for his belief in the revelation this church is founded on—God loves all people and Jesus died for all of us.

I don't know who committed this horrible act. I know I have not prayed for vengeance, but I am praying for justice.

When bad things like this happen, I never understand why. But there is one thing, I do know and that is, God is still on the throne.

Easter is the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ but it is also the reminder that Virgil, and we, too, will awake one day from our death and for eternity be in the presence of God.

In this time of increased violence against our community we have to remember that God hasn't brought us this far to leave us now. During this Easter season let us rejoice in the knowledge that Jesus is still the head of the church and the gates of hell shall ***not*** prevail against it.

THE UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES

5300 Santa Monica Boulevard, Suite 304, Los Angeles, California 90029 (213) 464-5100

March 1986

JOURNEY MAGAZINE

Dear Friends,

We are pleased to announce the renewal of UFMCC's publication - "JOURNEY."

JOURNEY will now be published four (4) times a year - during Eastertide, Pentecost, Dominiontide and Christmastide.

In 1986, the Eastertide issue will focus on news from other denominations on issues relating to UFMCC. Some exciting highlights are:

- From Pulpit to Politics: Supervisor Harry Britts Journey of Faith
- News about Rev. Virgil Scotts murder.
- KKK visits MCC (by Elder Nancy Wilson)
- Investigated by the Vatican: Interview with Sister Jeannine Grammick
- From United Methodist Church: The Case of Rev. Julian Rush
- Women in the Church interviews with women in other denominations
- News from across UFMCC
- Easter message by Rev. David Day

The second issue, (Pentecost) will focus on aids; the third (Dominiontide) on World Outreach, and the fourth (Christmastide) on Human Rights and on Christmas.

Rev. David Day, from MCC Austin is the Interim Editor. Distribution will continue from UFMCC offices in Los Angeles.

Enclosed is an order form for JOURNEY Subscriptions. The Eastertide issue is almost ready for shipping. Each Church will get one (1) complimentary copy of this issue. I encourage you to order your additional copies now. If your church has previously ordered JOURNEY in bulk (five or more copies), please fill out the order form to either increase your order or renew your past order. Thank you in advance.

Sincerely,

Ravi Verma, rh

Ravi Verma
Director of Administration

cc: To all UFMCC Churches
COMP. LIST

RV/rh

JOURNEY

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JOURNEY is a quarterly magazine of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (UFMCC). The UFMCC is an international denomination of Christian churches with a special outreach to the Lesbian and Gay community.

Viewpoints expressed in **JOURNEY** news or feature articles do not necessarily reflect those of the UFMCC.
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IN THIS ISSUE....

The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches has been in the forefront as related to a number of issues of modern Christianity. Some of these issues are Gay/Lesbians in the church, women in church leadership roles and inclusive language. It is often tempting to think that we are alone in dealing with these issues. Fact is there is a growing number of persons in many denominations who have joined us in the struggle.

In this issue of Journey we have devoted space to bringing some accounts of the experiences of such persons to our readers. We believe that Journey magazine has a very unique place as a religious publication. We are the only magazine that we know of which can present such a broad overview of events as related to the issues that we discuss within these pages. We believe that freedom is contagious. We hope that the freedom of our readers is enhanced by discovery of how that freedom is being experienced by others.

Our special thanks to United Methodist News Service and Religious News Service for their permission to run their articles in this issue, and future issues, of Journey Magazine.

THE EDITOR

FROM Pulpit TO Politics

(Harry Britt's Journey of Faith)

The following are comments of San Francisco City Supervisor Harry Britt transcribed from a recording of his appearance at the 12th General Conference of UFMCC in Sacramento on July 2nd, 1985. A former Methodist minister, Supervisor Britt is one of the most promiment elected gay officials in the country. In January, 1979, he succeeded the late Harvey Milk. Elected to a full term in December, 1979, Harry Britt was the only challenged incumbent to retain a seat on the Board of Supervisors. Supervisor Britt is 44 years old and a native of Port Arthur, Texas.

I am a former Methodist minister and was a minister for quite a number of years. I can't separate and disassociate, as I know you can't separate and disassociate, dealing with gay experience and dealing with Christian experience. Our lives, all of us, have been caught up in both. I would like to do what may sound like a testimonial....

...I did not begin to deal with my gay experience until I was 34 years old and during that first 34 years, the church was the place where I went to express my gentleness.

It was the place where I felt some sort of call to love, some sort of ability to express that part of me which was most open to other people and the place where I most wanted to give and share of my inward self. Growing up in Texas, the very culture and the Methodist church that invited me to share that love always set some pretty strict rules on how I was supposed to do it. It always seemed to me it was at those moments when I was feeling the most desire to reach out and be a part of the church family that I became most aware there was something about me this family didn't want to hear.

When I was 13 years old another boy reached out to me and expressed affection and I fled in terror. I didn't want to flee from it. Six months later he died of cancer and it was very clear in my mind that there was a connection between what we felt for one another and his death. This experience changed my whole posture vis-a-vis the church because of all the guilt and all of the pain I had felt before became greatly intensified. Now as I look back on all that (and, God isn't it awful to have to look back on all that), I realize my decision to enter the ministry, with all of the sincerity of my young faith, was, for the most part, a desire for justification. I think it is very hard for any of us who are dealing with the duality of being gay and being religious to deny that in our spirituality there is a desire for justification. We don't feel particularly accepted; we don't feel particularly justified; we don't feel particularly righteous; we don't feel particularly honest a lot of the time because the world does not welcome our honesty.

I don't think that lessens my decision, or any of our decisions, to try to find a place in the ministry of the Church. I was taught that God can use people who are seeking justification and I think St. Paul said something about that himself. There is a terror of being gay and being weak unlike that experienced by any other minority group in this world. It means lacking a support system even within your own immediate family. It means not having the kind of support groups you have if you are black or Jewish or whatever minority movement you may be a part of, and it has an impact. You have to see in all of us that stage: starting from a point of powerlessness, or fear, and developing a very rich personal inwardness about our life, a rich fantasy life, a place where we can get away from homophobia and be what we want to be.

To move forward a few light years, I found a different kind of faith in the gay ghetto in San Francisco. With all of the desire for love that I had found in the Methodist Church in Texas, one day I answered an ad in the Berkley Barb...from a guy who, like me, just desperately wanted to meet another gay human being (which I had not done at the age of 34). As it turned out, this guy was a Jew from Brooklyn and I was a Methodist from East Texas and yet somehow in the first hour that we were together we experienced more family and more commonality than anything that had ever happened to me in my entire life. He, like me, had experienced that terrible fear of being discovered and that terrible isolation and that terrible feeling that you are going to go through life without ever reaching out and touching anybody real. We touched and it was very beautiful. That moment to me was a great moment of faith because it was probably the first time that I had accepted the reality of my life, and with all of the theologizing I had done in the seminary, somehow the real point had not gotten through to me. I think it is a point that Metropolitan Community Church understands extremely well and it is

responsible in large part for the unity that you have in your fellowship. It is that faith is not finally a matter of sorting out the ideas, but it is a matter of accepting the reality of your life with courage and without qualification.

One reason we do that so well here is because the world has tried too hard keep us from doing it. When we do take that step, when some other gay person or some community of gay people offers us the chance to accept what we are without qualification, without justification, we're ready for it. We don't let go of it just real quick. Now that happened for me in the ghetto of San Francisco and wherever it happened for you,

...the movement from loneliness and powerlessness into a sense of being part of a community has got to be the great experience which makes life worth continuing.

Of course MCC was there in 1974 in our ghetto as it is in London, England, and all over the world, and when I was in Sydney I found there, as I have found in every MCC congregation that I have been able to visit, the same oneness of history and experience and the same absolute determination to not deny the reality of our lives; that is the basis of our faith. One of the high points in my relationship with your church was the meeting in San Francisco where the National Council of Churches was trying to decide whether they had enough faith to deal with your experience. Of course they didn't pass the test but it was so good to see the MCC folks there who understood that they were not being tested. Their task was to be what they are and to be faithful to their experience and their deepest sense of the meaning of their lives. If the world could not deal with that, they would keep offering the world that opportunity until they learned to deal with it. I thought that day (and I think now), "You go back to when you were so weak and you visualize the day when the leaders of the Church on Earth are having to figure out how to deal with you." One of the things that happened to us in our little ghetto in San Francisco was this remarkable man named Harvey Milk. In my particular case, having studied too much theology, I had been pretty much paralized in terms of being able to think and could always find both sides of every possible issue in a way which gave me an excuse not to do anything. Harvey would not accept that. There was another influence on my life named Jean Paul Sartre who had this great sense that you don't know who you are until you project your being out there and find out who you are and let the world find out who you are. Harvey said that in his own way. What he said was, "Until the world learns to deal with your being gay, that's the most important thing about you and you had better put it out there because then you will find that you can be free." He took the anger and the pride and the sense of community we had found in our ghetto and said, "Organize around that, become political, communicate; teach the world to deal with your experience because until they deal with your experience you aren't going to have any rights. Until they learn to deal with your experience, you aren't going to have the kind of free interaction with your fellow human being that constitutes mature human experience." That is what, I hope, our politics has been about. It is communicating our experience with faithfulness in a way the world learns to deal with us....

The reality of gay experience is changing very much. I see this change as a movement of faith. Like all movements of faith it is not a steady climb from the bottom to the top.

Since the day that Harvey Milk was killed, and Mayor George Moscone, on that day...our first reaction was, "Oh, my God, it's all over." That lasted about a tenth of a second and we realized it had just begun;

suddenly, as the Church realized when Jesus was no longer there in flesh or as Joshua realized when Moses was no longer there, our community was going to have to be what we had been saying we were. The power we felt that night marching in the streets of San Francisco to city hall with our candles was a Pentecostal experience. It was a sense that somehow there was something going on in us which was more important than one individual. It was all of those children out in the hinterlands of America who had not yet heard the message that being gay is all right. It was America needing to hear from their gay children and we were determined they were going to hear from us. I think since that time they have heard quite a great deal indeed, and the greatest obstacle to our communicating our experience in my judgement has been our fear of accepting our power. It has been our unwillingness to be all that we were created to be and all that we can be. If ever I have had a frustration with lesbians and gay men and with Harry Britt it has been at those moments when we have gone back into our childish fears, when we have been offered a chance to be, to speak, to communicate, to evangelize about what it means to be faithful to your history, and we have not always done that.

As a good Methodist, or a former good Methodist...I think we are in the process now of moving on to sanctification. I would hope we see that all of our energy dealing with justifying ourselves and trying to be what the world wants us to be is not faithful energy. Right now we have discovered who we are. We have a community, and all you ever have on this earth is a community of loving people. There ain't no more than that. We have that, and in that we have power, and with that power we can grow and we can move on to what we ought to be. Internally I think the AIDS crisis is the focus of that. No community of human beings has ever been asked to deal with more and no community of human beings has ever expressed so much maturity and so much courage in its response to something as the AIDS crisis has produced from us. We were becoming a mature community before AIDS came along. We were being offered gratifications other than the gratifications of the ghetto. We were accepting those offers and were moving into every part of our culture. AIDS has set the process forward, with all of its horror, in a way that has made us be men and women of a great deal more courage and a great deal more power than we ever were before. When I see the SHANTI

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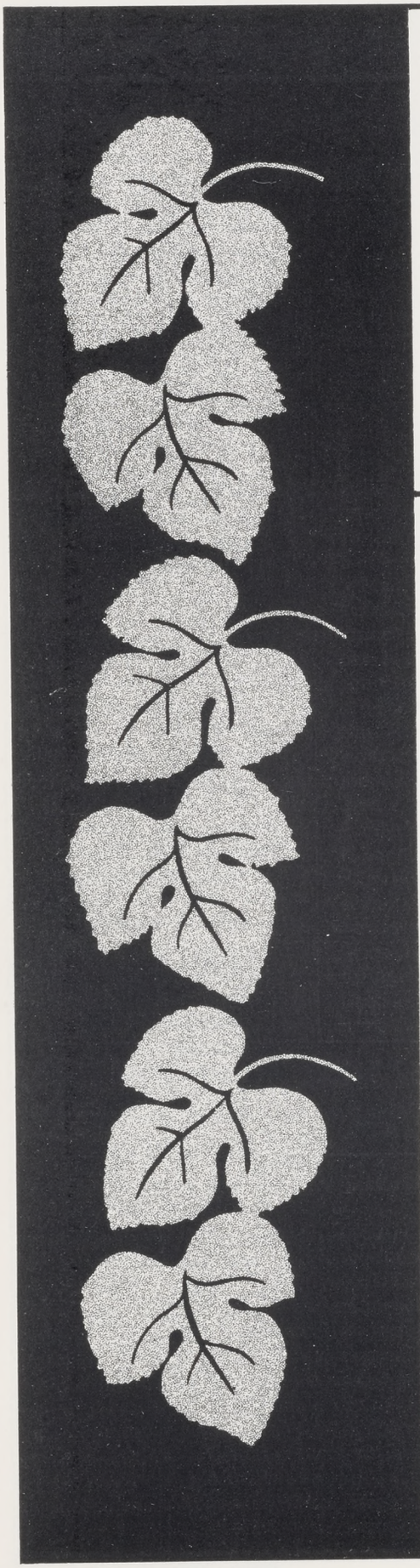

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO EVE: Women in the Church

by Jan Nunley

UFMCC has been on the cutting edge of progress where women in the Church are concerned. Inclusive language and the ordination of women are something we take for granted. But many of us came from denominations where they're still struggling to give women the equal share promised in Galatians 3:28...

1885

"The Southern Baptist Convention held in Savannah, Georgia, appoints a committee...whose business was to decide upon 'Representation by Women' in church affairs. This committee reported in favor of the word 'brethren' instead of 'members' being incorporated in the constitution, this confirming the right of man alone to take part in church councils..."
WOMAN, CHURCH AND STATE, Matilda Joslyn Gage, 1893

1985

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It was no accident that the 1985 annual meeting of Women in Ministry, SBC took as its theme "Voices of Hope from the Exile". It did seem like exile for the 350 Southern Baptist women ordained by their churches to be told once again that theirs is at best an ambiguous position as Baptists and ministers.

Not that Baptist women haven't known progress. For the first 72 years of the denomination's history, women weren't allowed to speak or vote at the SBC's annual meeting. Not until 1918 were women allowed to be voting "messengers" or delegates to the Convention. Gains were slow, but by the early '50's some 14 percent of the policy-making positions on various boards of the Convention were held by women.

Although women weren't allowed to participate in class discussions or take classes for credit, they were admitted to classes at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1904. By the late 1940's, they could take seminary classes for credit and in 1964 Southern Baptists ordained their first woman minister, Addie Davis.

Davis was joined by less than a dozen ordained SBC women as of the late '70's, but by 1982, there were 175. The next year 33 Southern Baptist women ministers met in what was to be a planning session for the formation of Women in Ministry, SBC. The group first met in Pittsburgh before the 1983 meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention. At that convention a resolution expressing appreciation for women's contributions to Southern Baptist life was adopted, but the issue of ordination was carefully sidestepped.

As the struggle accelerated between fundamentalist-conservatives and moderates for control of the Southern Baptist denomination, women were the losers. Easily the most hotly debated resolution of the 1984 Kansas City convention was one which cited Scripture as justification for relegating women to a secondary role in church life, and encouraged women to serve "in all aspects of church life and work in other than pastoral functions and leadership roles entailing ordination." Because Baptists retain autonomy at the local church level,

It is still possible for a woman to be ordained as a Southern Baptist minister or deacon, but the local Baptist association retains the right to "disfellowship" the or-

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WOMAN, CHURCH AND STATE, 1893

1986

"Policy-wise it takes a while for theory to be translated into practice, but by and large women are welcome in every aspect of Presbyterian ministry," says Cynthia Logan. She's associate pastor of Dallas' Preston Hollow Presbyterian Church. Her special area of ministry is something called Congregational Life and Membership--"which makes me the staff CLAM!" she jokes--a post in which she's responsible for such things as new member assimilation, coordinating volunteers, seniors and singles groups and fellowship dinners. "I find that I have been mostly accepted," Logan says, adding that she has served as Vice Moderator of the Regional Synod (the rough equivalent of an MCC District).

Little has changed since the two divisions of the Presbyterian church in the U.S. were united to form the Presbyterian Church (USA). According to Logan, the newly united church didn't call into question ordained clergy from either the United Presbyterians (Northern) or the Presbyterian Church/US (Southern).

Logan says the Presbyterian policy

opportunities for service. Likewise, she says, more conservative Presbyterians have left the denomination, especially in the East and South. "But here we're working within the system for change," she adds. "That's the Texas way."

1878

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WOMAN, CHURCH AND STATE, 1893

1986

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"It's been a long journey for both men and women to understand what this kind of wholeness means," says Rosanna Kazanjian. She's a deacon and is due to be ordained as a priest in April. Now in Richardson, Texas at the Church of the Epiphany, Kazanjian started her quest for ordination in Boston, and says Massachusetts is still at the forefront of support for Episcopal women. Two women are now professors at the Episcopal divinity school at Cambridge: Sue Hyatt and Carter Heywood, whom Kazanjian calls "pioneers". Last June nine more women achieved ordination as priests.

But it's been slow going, partly as the result of a "grandfather clause" in the Episcopal decision. It is up to the individual bishop involved to decide whether or not to ordain women in his diocese or allow them to serve. "It was probably the most loving decision in handling a difficult situation," Kazanjian says, but it has resulted in women shifting from diocese to diocese in search of a sympathetic bishop. "Having a woman bishop will be one of the keys to full expression for women in the church."

Women have always carried a strong leadership role in the Episcopal laity, and they carry good representation in most governing boards.

Up until now, Kazanjian says, the rationale behind excluding women from the priesthood has run in a traditional vein: Jesus was a man, all the apostles were men, therefore men are to be priests, deacons and bishops. "But underneath those rationales of 'tradition'", Kazanjian observes, "there's reflected a fear of women in general, and feminists in particular.

God is calling women into leadership. The church is broken without that."

1888

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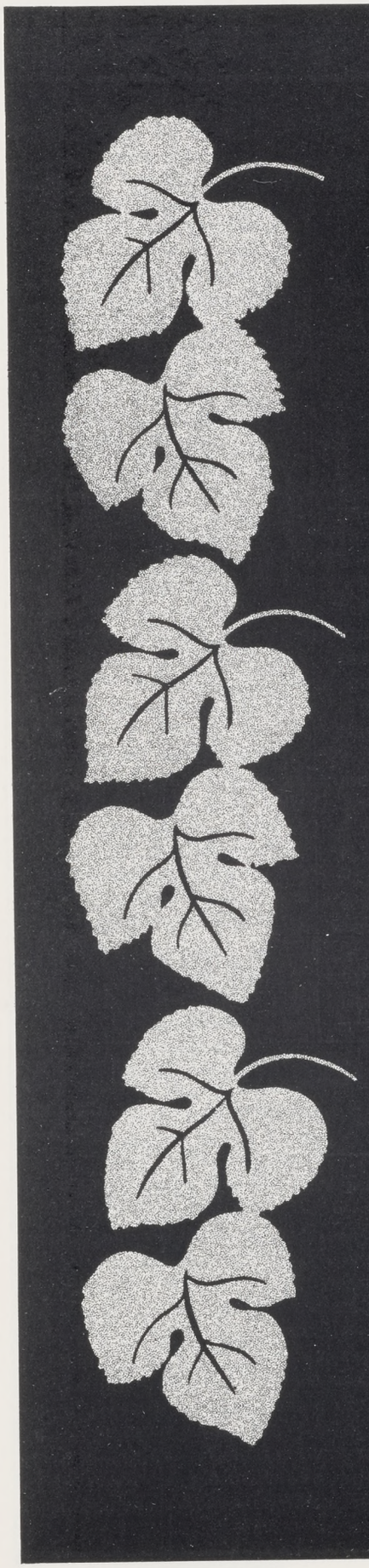

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

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Still, not all Southern Baptist leaders agree with the 1984 resolution and its reaffirmation in 1985. The president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., is quoted as saying, "One of the saddest sights on this earth is a man forfeiting his own wholeness in the gospel by denying a woman the partnership which the gospel requires." Dr. Randall Lolley goes on to add, "Women are not answerable to men for what they do with their gifts. Women, like men, are answerable to God."

1878

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Logan says the Presbyterian policy towards women in the church is a natural outgrowth of the church's historic theological thrust. "We've had to rethink what ministry is, and our understanding of how women fit into that. But the bottom line in the Reformed tradition is 'the church reformed and ever reforming'. Our theology compels us toward a process of hearing Scripture as it speaks to the times, with the conviction that we may perceive something different with each hearing."

Women are also being ordained to the position of Elder in Presbyterian congregations, and lay women are a strong part of Preston Hollow. "We rely on everybody. In a church with 3000 members you need to count on more than just clergy." Logan says Presbyterian congregations have taken in a number of women from other denominations seeking more opportunities for service. Likewise, she says, more conservative Presbyterians have left the denomination, especially in the East and South. "But here we're working within the system for change," she adds. "That's the Texas way."

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ministers, who denied them admission. During the debate over the issue, a Rev. Thomas Tinsey declared that "Woman is that part...of humanity upon which the great labor, care and burden of reproduction is placed. We can conceive of no good reason for making women aside from this. Man is certainly better suited to all other work."

WOMAN, CHURCH AND STATE, 1893

1986

The United Methodist Church officially voted to ordain women in 1954, but it wasn't until the mid-'70's that women began to appear in any numbers at Methodist seminaries. Barbara Markum is associate pastor at Dallas' White Rock United Methodist Church. Markum was raised in the Episcopal Church, but says it was "more difficult to penetrate. It's easier when you have the system standing behind you." Unlike the Episcopal "grandfather clause," the Methodist decision promised every ordained woman a place, and so Methodist bishops have been "forced" by church policy to accept women in the ministry. Progress has not exactly been meteoric, Markum reports--"it's more common to see women in associate positions"--but some women are launching out on their own and "for the most part, it works out".

Methodist theology was a help in gaining ground for women. Markum says Methodists rely on four "guideposts" in evaluating any issue: tradition, Christian experience, Scripture and reason. "Scripture affirms women and encourages inclusivity. Jesus embraced all sorts and conditions of men and women," says Markum. She likens the policy shift on women to the change in perception on the issue of slavery in the last century. "The book of Philemon would seem to approve slavery, but it was written in the context of the time. Now we know that slavery is wrong. Similarly, those references in the letters to Timothy to women keeping silence in church refer to social conditions at the time in which they were written."

The old attitudes still surface.

The Reverend Elder Jeri Ann Harvey Called To Full-Time Evangelism

Her voice commands attention (She was once recorded as a singer with the Nelson Riddle Orchestra). Her presence is sensed and felt as much as seen. She walks the aisles bringing her hard-hitting messages of God's love and grace right to where you are sitting.

It is immediately obvious that the Reverend Elder Jeri Ann Harvey speaks with the confidence of one who has found wholeness and power in her life. She recently announced that she will share that message of power and wholeness with congregations as full-time evangelist for the UFMCC.

The Reverend Elder Harvey has been a clergy person in UFMCC since 1975. She has been an Elder since 1979, served as District Coordinator of the Southcentral District, and pastored churches in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, Houston, Texas, and Los Angeles, California. She has served on the National Board of Directors of the Human Rights Campaign Fund.

"She will electrify your congregation," writes UFMCC Founder The Reverend Elder Troy Perry of her preaching style. "She will bless your hearts with her innovative preaching."

The Reverend Elder Harvey believes that she has a special message to bring. It is obvious that she has been given the ability to deliver that message in a very special way.

"I want people to know that they can't be robbed of God's love," she says. "Once given, it is there. We have received it and nobody has the power to take it away from us."

"I met someone at a church out in the country once who said to me, 'You're nice, but I know what you're doing is of the devil," she laughs.

Markum is part of an ecumenical group for women in ministry meeting monthly in Dallas. She says at least half the women are Southern Baptists. She finds many women from other denominations are finding refuge in the Methodist Church. "For instance, Martha Gilmore is a former Baptist minister who came to the Methodist Church. She was ordained, but the Baptist churches wouldn't call her to a pulpit. Ironically, her husband Jerry was voted out of an important committee in the Southern Bapist Convention because his wife had gone to another denomination."

Markum is optimistic about the future of Methodist women and of women in the church as a whole. "We're making some strides," she says. "Besides, you just can't keep women down."

A BOOK REVIEW

By Tom Doyal

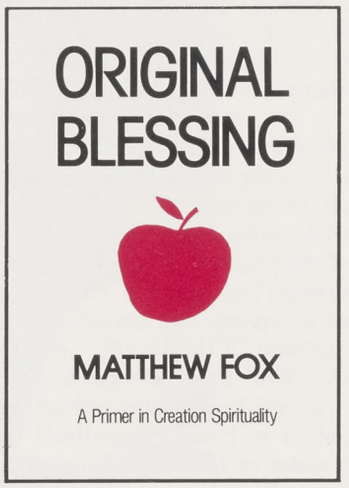
ORIGINAL BLESSING: A PRIMER IN CREATION SPIRITUALITY by Matthew Fox, Bear & Company, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1983, 348 pages, $10.95 in trade paperpack, available at your local bookseller.

The reality of God's love for all creation has been often told and the telling has been affirmed in the personal experiences of believers. While the truth remains the same, Matthew Fox suggests in his book, ORIGINAL BLESSING, that our lives can be further enriched and our faith strenghtened by thinking about that eternal truth in different ways. Fox is a Dominican scholar and teacher with the Institute in Culture and Creation Spirituality at Holy Names College in Oakland, California. In ORIGINAL BLESSING he builds upon his earlier written works, including A SPIRITUALITY NAMED COMPASSION and MEDITATIONS WITH MEISTER ECKHART.

ORIGINAL BLESSING is a powerful book. This reviewer found it to be slow reading, not because the book is not well written, but because every page contains a thought, observation or little-known piece of scholarship which invites the reader to put the book aside to muse and integrate the teaching into one's familiar way of thinking about spirituality. These internal meditations are precisely Fox's declared intention, and he is extraordinarily successful at attaining that intention.

Fox says at the commencement of the book that modern Christians have paid too high a price for the complacency with which we view the miracle of existence. He believes the contemporary focus of theological thought on the concept of sin dominates today's world-view to our detriment. Part of that high price has been the development in Western culture of sexist, racist, militaristic, consumerist, anti-ecological patterns of living, including the evermore dangerous global game of nuclear brinksmanship. The exaggerated emphasis on the hereafter has led to a shirking of Christian responsibility in the present. In particular, Fox thinks that the contemporary Christian community should become more devoted to justice in our world.

The author would not displace the concept of sin or original sin in Christian thought, but he does want to supplement that one thought-model with an increased emphasis on the older, but less commonly held idea that before original sin there was an original blessing bestowed upon all creation by God. Fox believes that by viewing God's love in this light, great changes can flow into our lives, religious institutions and entire world. He calls for a religion that is hospitable to science rather than seeing science as an adversary to spiritual values.



One idea advanced in the book that may be of particular interest to Lesbians and Gay men is the special spiritual merit of *ANAWIM*, a word meaning outcast, the down-trodden, the poor and oppressed. Fox recites the biblical examples of Christ's tender regard for these special people. He also quotes from Native American Jose Hobday who said, "Why are white people so afraid of the homosexual? In Native American languages we don't even have a word for the homosexual. In fact, it is well know among us that the most spiritual people are often homosexuals and these people have often been counselors to our greatest chiefs." Certainly, in present day Western culture homosexuals are among the *ANAWIM*.

The personal challenge implicit in the inclusion of homosexuals among the people who may have special merit as spiritual guides and models, is the necessity of living up to that in one's own daily life. *ANAWIM*, says Fox, "are an authentic source of revelation; they are our primary spiritual directors; they reveal where the kingdom/queendom of God is hidden (see Matt. 25). And they challenge all to *metanoia*, change of heart and lifestyle." Further, Fox writes, "The spiritualities of Native Americans and of Third World peoples, of feminists and of blacks, of homosexuals and of the handicapped, are creation-centered spiritualities."

Much of the difficulty Western culture experiences in dealing with pleasure, particularly Eros, is traced in the book to the writing of St. Augustine and some of those attitudes find little or no support in the scriptures themselves. Peeling away the encrusted teaching of self-loathing with sufficient diligence leaves the Seeker standing, at last, before the glorious, shining reality of God's original blessing upon all creation, including the Seeker.

ORIGINAL BLESSING is a stunning synthesis of compassion, dedication to justice and love. It is true to the teachings of Christ and a call to all who have retreated into comfort or cynicism. All are called to follow God by the loving exercise of the imagination and by the wonder-filled contemplation of God's love for all creation. The book is provocative, profound and a blessing to all who seek the face of God. This reviewer commends it to your reading.

MCC PASTOR
REV. VIRGIL SCOTT MURDERED

by the Rev. Elder Freda Smith

Rev. Virgil Scott conducted the Sunday service at the Metropolitan Community Church he pastored in Stockton, California, visited with friends that evening and headed for his car about 10:30 p.m.

He was mourning the recent death of his sister and being carried by the same strong, quiet faith that had sustained him in over 11 years of ministry in the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. For five of those years, he had pastored the MCC in Stockton.

This Sunday, February 16, 1986, Virgil Scott would drive through a city that he had come to know very well.

"Stockton is a very violent community," Sgt. Brian Thompson says from his vantage point as an investigator with the Stockton Police Department.

It is something that Virgil Scott knew very well.

About a year prior to this night he had reported to the police department that shots had been fired at his car. He was aware of the belief in the community that seven or eight gay persons were killed or missing in Stockton (the police officially acknowledge three) since July. (It is reported that a 51 year old school teacher, missing for over three months, was found dead on February 26th.

In November, a black gay man was found hanged in Concord, California, near Stockton. There was visible Klan activity in the area where the slaying occurred the night of that murder.

Concord police labeled that a suicide despite the fact that the "suicide" note mispelled the victim's name and the names of members of his family. The strap that was used to hang him has been "lost".)

He was also aware of numerous reports of gay bashings in the area. He knew from death threats he had received on the phone that his own life might be in danger. He also knew why he was there.

"Virgil brought a lot of positive energy to this community," said one businessperson, "even though this community can be ungrateful at times."

"He was an activist in a very positive kind of way," said Unitarian Pastor Bob Greene. "His activism was a kind of positive educational process of making people aware."

It was this gentle activism that brought respect and appreciation from other members of the Stockton Downtown Clergy Association of which he was a member.

It was also this gentle activism that placed him in a leadership role in working to meet the needs of impoverished persons in Stockton. He was past President of the Stockton Poverty Rights Committee.

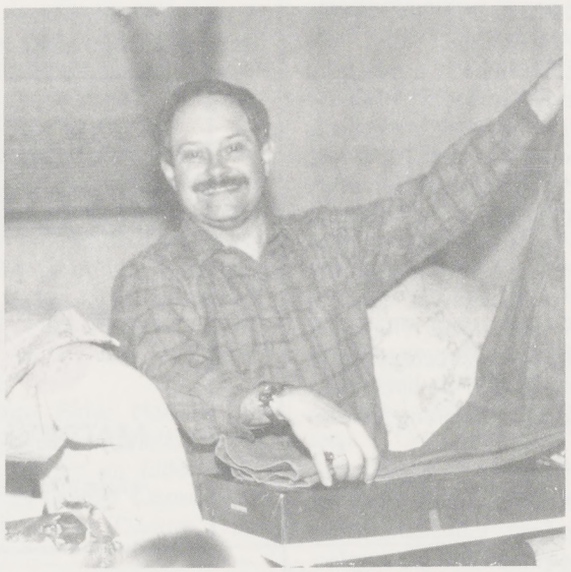
This soft-spoken Pastor was also founder of the Stockton Gay Pride Celebration; cofounder of the San Joaquin AIDS group and a member of the training staff for the Hand-to-Hand program for persons with AIDS.

In recent months he had become well-known for his ministry in urging gay men to practice safe sex. He was often seen in gay men's gathering places passing out condoms and urging them to observe safe sex practices.

About a year ago, the Stockton police raided a gay bar without any apparent legitimate cause. Rev. Scott, along with some other Gay community leaders, met with the police to protest.

As a result of the intervention, an internal investigation was undertaken. The investigation was concluded without results ever being made public.

Tonight, Virgil Scott, who in his pleasant and gentle way had spent so



FBI ASKED TO INVESTIGATE

much time working to save and enrich lives, would meet an assailant who would take his.

There is little evidence concerning what happened after 10:30. There are unsubstantiated rumors that he was seen later in the evening.

No one knows for certain.

There is evidence that he may have been working on the church books during the evening. Part of the day's contributions were listed and it appears that he may have been interrupted as he worked.

Although Rev. Scott had great difficulty seeing without corrective lenses, he would later be found with neither his contact lenses nor his glasses.

What is known is that he met a violent death. Severly beaten, Virgil Scott was stabbed seven to ten times. His body was wrapped in a blanket and placed in the luggage compartment of his Plymouth hatchback automobile.

The car was found the next day by an employee of a business near where it had been abandoned. The person had become concerned that the car was sitting in a heavy rain and windstorm with the windows rolled down. When he went to roll up the window, he saw the body in the hatch portion of the car.

Police investigators immediately sealed off the apartment where Rev. Scott lived. There had been no sign of violence in the apartment.

"I do not believe this is a plot," said Sgt. Thompson, assigned to investigate the case. He said that violence is touching persons of all races and religions in Stockton.

The same day that Rev. Scott's body was discovered, two other gay men were found dead in Merced and Atwater, California. One was shot and his car set on fire, and the other stabbed.

Police expressed a belief that the murders were not related.

At this writing, the police investigation continues and the Stockton Record newspaper has offered a $1,000 reward for information in the Scott case.

The UFMCC has officially asked the Federal Bureau of Investigation to enter the case of the murder of Rev. Scott. Describing the slaying of Rev. Scott as a part of a "concentrated effort to murder, terrorize and otherwise deprive ministers and others of their civil rights," the UFMCC pointed to recent burnings of three MCC churches as further evidence of terrorism.

The Northwest District of UFMCC has also initiated a fund to attain the services of a private investigator to look into the slaying of Virgil Scott. Contributions may be sent to: Northwest District UFMCC, 150 Eureka St., San Francisco, California 94114.

A memorial service was held on Saturday, February 22, to "Celebrate the life of the Rev. Virgil Scott." The service was attended by about 400 people. The church and grounds were decorated with rainbow flags ot the type that Rev. Scott loved to display.

At the end of the service, 40 rainbow-colored balloons (one for each year of his life) were released by members of his congregation.

NEW UFMCC GROUP MEETS IN PRISON

A group which meets for worship at the California Institute for Women has petitioned UFMCC and been granted special status under Fellowship Bylaws Article VI which deals with "New and Special Works and Voting Church Bodies". The work has been underway for over two years and now has an average attendance of 30 women in weekly Wednesday night worship services. Following are excerpts from the petition which was filed by and signed by The Reverend Ro Halford who has been traveling to the prison to minister:

It began as a vision, a dream to help Lesbian women who otherwise may not receive help or may otherwise not receive quality services from the "outside". It began as an effort to reach out to women who felt alone and hopeless because no one else seems to care....On July 18, 1985, after much effort and struggle, we were finally given permission to hold our first worship service at C.I.W.

The meetings in the beginning were not well attended (We were only allowed the use of meeting space in the Administration Building where the prison guards are on duty.). If that wasn't enough, the women were asked to sign in and out in order to attend service. They were risking being labeled "Homosexual." They were fearful of the consequences.

Father Jim Fallon, a Catholic chaplain, was very supportive of our group....As soon as he was assigned to us the Reverend Fallon gave us permission to meet once a week. The worship night was changed to Wednesday, by our request, and we were given another room (the Pre-release Classroom) for our use during those times. We were finally inside, behind the bars!

The attendance began to steadily increase. We went from 5-10 women to 25 plus. Although it has been a gradual increase, we are now averaging 30 women per service (not including those who come from outside).

When we showed the video "God, Gays and the Gospel," we had an attendance of 72 women! Outside of that, our largest attendance has been 56 women at one worship service. The word is just now getting out and women are beginning to know that it is safe for them to come to church.

One of the most obvious ways in which we have seen our witness and ministry take effect is the manner in which the women have come to regard one another while inside. In the midst of a very racially-mixed group and a group filled with a variety of emotions, one woman prayed for all her friends...then added, "for my enemies too, God...," some of them were in the room with her.

I share that as an example for you. I share that because I want you to share in the emotional impact of the moment. It was a woman praying for her enemies at a time when the race issues were at their peak. It was a time when otherwise it would have been the proper procedure to go out and stand ready to fight.

The women are just now beginning to build a real community behind prison walls. They are beginning to know who the "churchgoers" are and know that they have common bonds between them.

One of the areas where we can best serve as ministers to these women is to let them know that "we are everywhere" and that MCC is all over the world. We need to let them know that when they get out they will have a church to call home....

Most of all, the women at C.I.W. want to be affiliated with UFMCC. They want to be connected to the hope and vision that is ours. I would be pleased to introduce any of them to you as members of our church. They are vital and alive with hope. Praise God!

UFMCC DISTRICTS TO NAME THIRD WORLD TASK FORCE

Each UFMCC District will soon be requested to name a Third World task force under a plan outlined by the Executive Committee in October. To be known as the District Task Forces on Third World Ministry, the groups will be charged with developing a concept of ministry for the people in their district from a Third World perspective, providing support and encouragement for Third World persons in their district, offering educational and social opportunities and doing fund raising for Third World ministries.

Each District Task Force will elect two representatives to the Third World Conference to be held in Los Angeles in October of this year. The members of the Task Forces will also act as liaison to their churches from the Third World Conference and various Commissions such as the newly formed Third World Missiology Commission. The Missiology Commission is commissioned to develop an understanding of ministry in doing "missionary" work in Third World countries in particular, and to Third World persons in general. The commission will be looking at, "How MCC can begin new works in Third World countries without damaging or totally disregarding those persons' indigenous spirituality while remaining faithful to the Gospel". The Commission is chaired by the Rev. Delores Berry.

The Third World Task Forces will also be in communication with District White People Against Racism caucuses. Third World Ministries is encouraging the formation of these caucuses at the District level.

"It is anticipated that the Third World Task Forces and the White People Against Racism caucuses can work together wherever appropriate," says Loni Allen, Director of UFMCC Department of Third World Ministries, "To offer to local churches support and education to grow together in wisdom and grace to understand more clearly how racism affects all of our lives."

THE KKK VISITS MCC

By Reverend Elder Nancy Wilson

I was in Ft. Worth, Texas, for the National Council of Churches meeting and the Reverend Elder Don Eastman had invited me to preach at MCC Dallas which is about 30 miles east of Ft. Worth.

The Sunday before I left Los Angeles for Ft. Worth we had a report at the Fellowship offices that the Ku Klux Klan had visited Agape MCC in Ft. Worth. Newly elected Pastor Marge Perry had spent some time on the phone with Klan members who called to announce their plans to visit.

Two men and a woman from the Klan attended the service with plain clothes police in the congregation and the press waiting for them outside. The Klan's comment, after the service, was the the church had a good pastor but needed a new congregation.

When a reporter asked why, they responded, "Well, there were blacks (sic) and whites worshipping together, which shouldn't be, and we saw some women holding hands."

The press did not think that this was interesting enough to give the Klan some coverage, which was fine with Agape MCC!

Later that week, the Klan contacted the Dallas church and said they would "pay their respects" in Dallas the following Sunday. The Klan promised that this time they would wear their robes.

The Reverend Eastman cancelled a trip to Denver where he was scheduled to hold a Spiritual Renewal. He let the MCC Dallas people know what was happening and they got prepared.

Sunday morning arrived and the Dallas church was at capacity in attendance. They were prepared to have church, despite the visitors' threatening presence. Don and I robed for church and looked out the window at the three men and one woman who were obviously from the Klan. The police were talking to them. They were told that they couldn't wear their robes within several blocks of the church.

Plainclothes police were in the service, as were members of the press. In addition, Governing Board members of the National Council of Churches, including one member of the World Council of Churches, were present in the church.

As the Reverend Eastman and I got ready to enter the church to proceed, the Klan members preceded us into the sanctuary. They were graciously handed bulletins by the ushers of MCC Dallas. The Reverend Eastman and I just looked at each other, shaking our heads.

The Reverend Elder Jeri Ann Harvey once told me that years ago, when the Klan burned a cross on the church lawn of MCC Houston where she was then a Pastor, she had thought to herself, "Is this a grade B movie?"

I understood how she felt.

The Klan left before communion, but not before I had the opportunity to preach on the lectionary reading for the day. It was, delightfully, on the Great Commandment to love God, and our neighbors as ourselves! I preached about perfect love casting out fear, and that it is fear, not hatred, that is the opposite of love. Hatred is only a child of fear. The fear in those four people was that morning palpable.

The love in MCC Dallas was casting it out, with God's help.

They left and went to a distant corner and tried to hand out literature. I observed and felt several things that day:

1) The MCC white southerners-by-birth in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area made lots of jokes about the Klan, and seemed to be embarrased by their presence in a unique way--I knew that partly had to do with my being a "Yankee," and would I associate them with the Klan's stereotype of southern white racism? We all participated in the joking, (to relieve tension!) but I sensed for some white folks it had moments of deep discomfort and shame.

2) Blacks, at least some of them, in the Dallas church, had a different gut level of response, as would seem obvious. The Reverend Eastmen told me of his own awakening to the different response of the black members of his church, which even went beyond all joking, to the all-too-recent memories of lynching and murder and terror.

3) There was an incredible show of solidarity and strength and preparedness in this, one of our largest churches. People did not stay away—they came in droves! They protected me and their church leaders and literally surrounded the Klan with a clear message of what was and was not acceptable in our church home. It was almost "overkill", but at another level. I was grateful for the people proportions—320 to 4. What would this feel like in an MCC church of 15 or 20? How would it feel where you do not know your police department as well?

4) The Klan themselves were obviously poor, undereducated, frightened folks. Unlovely and badly dressed. As they entered the church and were handed bulletins, I felt tears stinging in my eyes. Who could possibly need the love and unhindered grace of God more than these people? I saw the ending of "Places in the Heart," only with Klan, NCC folks, MCC'ers black and white and hispanic—all worshipping together. Well, almost. We are not quite there yet. Yet I know, it is not these Klan folks who control the politics and economy of this world, or who are really the enemy we face. They are only desperate human beings who have been manipulated by those with much money and power and "bigger fish to fry."

5) Notice that the thing that they criticized us for first and foremost was our racial inclusivity. Everything else in Klan ideology (homophobia, anti-semitism, etc.) springs from the sickness of racism. It is always our sisters and brothers of color who are ultimately the target.

RUN MAR

They didn't sleep much last night. There had been a lot of talking. There were sobs and comforting phrases. There were statements of regret and bitter declarations. Somehow this is one of the most difficult days after the death of someone you love, this third day. On the day of the death you are so caught up in the shock of it all. It seems unreal, unbelievable. Following that, there is a time of notifying friends and taking care of official details and planning for the burial. It is not until that third day that it all begins to come so vividly into focus. The reality of it, the emptiness and the loneliness start to be felt. It is on the third day that we see them, huddled together in an upper room. It is perhaps the same room where he had shared dinner with them so recently. Now their eyes are swollen from weeping and their heads dulled by lack of sleep. We are somewhere in Jerusalem, probably west of the Temple area. We are certainly within sight of Roman sentries patrolling the city from strategically placed guard towers. Look around the room. Here are those who would "Turn the world upside down." Some of them sitting, some sleeping, some pacing or weeping or quietly talking. No one is sure what might happen next. The Roman soldiers have crucified Jesus. Perhaps next they will come for his followers or members of his family. Nervously they watch the approach to the house. Now fear mixes with their dispair. They are motionless, helpless and paralyzed by their anguish. Someone suggests that according to custom the women should go and annoint the body with spices and perfumes. They gather the necessary items and slip quietly through the doorway in the first light of day. The silence is broken only by their whispers, by the rustle of their clothing as they walk huddled together against the dampness of the morning. They move solemnly and silently to the distressing task that calls them. Tired and dulled by the grief one of them slips on a paving stone made wet by the morning mist that hugs the ground. There is a flurry of whispers as the others clutch her arms and close ranks around her to keep her from falling. They quickly look around to see if the Romans heard anything. They push their way through the grasses and bushes and approach the place of the tomb. The bottoms of their robes are damp from the mist. There seems to be more songbirds here than on most mornings. The sunshine is dancing off the dew drops on the grass but none of them take notice. They tremble as they come to the last bend in the path. Memories flash across their minds--visions of that cross and the soldiers and the blood. They are cruel, painful visions. Suddenly they stop stone still. Mary, the mother of Jesus, gasps. Joanna moans unintelligibly. Now they are walking faster. Now they are running. How can this be? The stone has been rolled away from the entrance to the tomb. How could anyone move such a stone? Did someone steal the body? Why?

The women hesitate at the entrance, but now Mary Magdalene charges in. There is no body there. Here are the wrapping linens, the burial cloth and the cloth which had been on his face; all rolled up and placed neatly as if laid aside. Their hushed tones become louder as all of the women rush in. Everyone is offering an opinion. Everyone is asking questions. No one is exactly sure how long they have been standing there but they all become aware that there are two figures, two angels, with them. The women fall silent. They fall down on their knees and press their faces to the ground. Now the angels are asking questions.

"Why do you seek the living among the dead?"

"Don't you remember that he said on the third day he would rise again?"

"Jesus is not here. Jesus is risen."

There is silence. Mary Magdalene raises her head, opens one eye and slowly looks around the garden. They're gone. "He's alive," she says as she explodes onto her feet, "He's alive!"

The others are startled, 'Shhhhhh," they warn, "You are going to attract the attention of the Romans."

Simultaneously they all get the same idea. They must discuss this with the others. They pull their garments over their ankles and start to rush back down the path. Now their voices are louder. They are talking excitedly. The others hear them approaching and, concerned that they will attract attention, fling open the door to rush them inside. They are all talking at once, something about angels; something about an empty tomb. Simon Peter is too impatient to wait to hear more. He bolts out the door.

"Oh, no you don't," yells Mary Magdalene, "Not without me." She fires out the door behind him.

Now they are all following. They are running with their disbelief, with their confusion, their doubt; running with their hope to an empty tomb.

Simon Peter is the first inside. Sure enough it is just as they said. There is the burial cloth, the head cloth all rolled up and placed to the side.

"I don't see any angels," he booms. "Mary, where are these angels?"

He comes out shaking his head. They all come out shaking their heads. John is later to write, "For as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise again from the dead."

So they leave--leave the empty tomb, leave the garden. All of them leave; all except Mary Magdalene.

She's weird, staying behind like that at the cemetery. She just won't give up. She is still searching for something.

ARY RUN ...an Easter Message

by Rev. David Day

Old weird Mary; actually believes that resurrection business. There she is sitting all alone in the graveyard.

As the sun rises higher in the sky, she stands there and she is weeping. "I must take one more look," she thinks. Slowly she peeks into the tomb. It isn't dark. Here are those two angels again and they are asking questions again.

"What are you crying about?"

"Because they have taken away my Jesus and I don't know where they have taken him," she answers.

Just at that moment she turns and standing behind her is the gardener. Maybe this one will have some answers. Never mind these angels, what do they know. She will ask the gardener. She will get to the bottom of this episode once and for all.

"Woman, why are you weeping?" asks the gardener, "For whom are you looking?"

"Oh," she says, "I am looking for Jesus. You have taken him away, tell me where."

The gardener speaks again. This time her name, "Mary."

How did this gardener know her name? And that voice....

She looks up and as the tears roll back enough for her eyes to come into focus she is looking right into the eyes of the risen Savior.

"It's you! It's you! It's you!" she exclaims, "You're alive! You're alive! You're alive? You're alive!"

Now she is crying again but not from despair. She is trembling. She is dancing. She has seen. She is sure. Oh, the joy!

"There is not much time for this," she is reminded.

Back in the upper room there is still emptiness, they are still crying, they are still grieving, lonely, unbelieving. Back in the upper room they are still huddled scared in a dark, depressing room.

"You are the Messenger with the greatest and happiest message in all of history."

"Tell them, Mary, don't let them suffer any longer than they have to. Don't let them be frightened any longer then they have to. Go tell them. Now, quickly, run, Mary run!"

Away from the tomb, through the tall grasses, "RUN, MARY RUN!" Past the guard towers with their soldiers, they are powerless now, "RUN, MARY!" Past the Temple with its gleaming roofs, through the darkened passageways into the sparkling sunlight, "RUN, MARY RUN!"

Now she is charging through the door and light bursts into the room. She is breathless and all of their eyes are on her. "You have their attention now Mary, TELL THEM!"

The words come bursting from her mouth.

"I know it. You can't deny me now, I know it. JESUS IS ALIVE! Deny it if you want to, I know. Say I am crazy if you want to, I have seen! Doubt me if you will, I have heard the voice I know!" She is dancing. She is laughing, "JESUS IS ALIVE!"

The upper room still exists in our time just as surely as it did on that day. It is repeated time after time in our world. Wherever there is despair. Wherever there are those who do not know that Jesus is alive, for them the upper room is still with us. It may even be where there are those who call themselves Christians, saying prayers pretty enough to be heard by each other but intended to go nowhere. There may also be upper rooms where we find those who have rejected the news of the risen Savior because of their unbelief. Perhaps the darkest upper rooms of all are those occupied by persons who may believe that Christ is alive, is risen, but has no interest in them. They know that the Bible says, "Whosoever will" but they have been told that they, somehow, don't count; that they are different; that Christ didn't rise from the dead for them.

Yes, there are upper rooms today but thank God there are also still Mary Magdalenes.

There are those who refuse to take no for an answer. There are those who keep seeking. There are those who keep searching, who refuse to leave the garden until the answer comes. There are those who will look again and again and won't be satisfied with a superficial religion or a superficial theology. Still they come to the garden today searching, seeking, refusing to leave.

Even in their despair or grief or loneliness or doubt, they seek until they hear that voice: "Why are you weeping?" Suddenly all of the reasons for weeping seem to escape them. Then the "Gardener" calls their name. There is no mistaking that voice when it calls your name. You know your name is written on the palm of Christ's hand, that it has been known since before the foundation of the World. "My daughter, my son, why are you weeping?"

If only we could savor that experience, just stay in the garden and listen to that voice. But no! Quickly we are reminded: "This is a wonderful experience for you, but remember those who are back in the upper room. Back in the upper room they are still hurting and lonely and lost." Jesus speaks to us the same words spoken to Mary Magdalene so long ago, "Go! Find them and tell them. Don't stay here. There is an upper room in the next bedroom, in the next apartment, in the next office. There is an upper room at your sister's house. There is an upper room at your brother's house. They are still crying there. They're still helpless and hurting there. Run, run, run and tell them JESUS IS ALIVE!

The Reverend Elder Nancy Wilson To Pastor MCC Los Angeles

The Reverend Elder Nancy Wilson has been selected to pastor the UFMCC "Mother Church" Metropolitan Community Church of Los Angeles. She will be officially installed as Pastor on April 13th with the Reverend Elder Troy Perry and the Reverend Judy Dahl presiding at the installation service.

"It is a church with a kind of diversity unlike any other in the Fellowship," the Reverend Elder Wilson says of MCC L.A. adding, "I approach the work with a great deal of enthusiasm."

The original Metropolitan Community Church which birthed the UFMCC has been in its present location at 1050 South Hill Street for over ten years. The congregation is now considering a possible move from that location.

"We are having to look at the church's mission and identity all over again," says the Reverend Elder Wilson.

For the past seven years, the Reverend Elder Wilson has served as Clerk of the Board of Elders for UFMCC. She will remain in that position during a transitional period. She is also Co-Director of UFMCC's Department of Ecumenical Relations.

"To me this is the biggest challenge I have ever had," she says of her new assignment. "I look forward to it with a great deal of excitement."

NEW UFMCC STUDY GROUP FORMS IN INDONESIA

In 1978 the Reverend Johaanna Kawengian was asked to leave the Indonesian Protestant Reform Church because it was discovered that she was a Lesbian. She had been a Pastor in that denomination since 1963. A newspaper in Indonesia picked up the story and there was publicity.

Out of those difficult times for the Reverend Kawengian came an interesting development. Women began to write to her.

Indonesia is a country that is eighty percent Moslem. There are no actual laws against homosexuality but the predominant fundamentalist Moslem beliefs make life very difficult for Gay and Lesbian persons. The women who wrote to her looked for spiritual guidance.

Two years ago the Reverend Kawengian (known as Anky) heard about the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches and began to write to the Reverend Elder Jean White who is UFMCC Executive Secretary of World Church Extension.

This past January the Reverend Elder White visited Indonesia and met with the Reverend Kawengian and 51 women who were interested in joining UFMCC. There is now a UFMCC study group in Jakarta, Indonesia.

One of the ambitions that the group has is the establishment of a workshop for handcrafts to help many of the persons in the community who are unemployed. Unemployment is high because of the economic climate of that country. Many have also lost their jobs because they are Lesbian or Gay.

BRIEF NOTES FROM SEVERAL COUNTRIES....

UFMCC hopes to find a more receptive climate in the Phillipines under the new leadership in that country. The Fellowship reports a lot of contact from there but has had little success in providing ministry because of the controls exercised by the former regime.

An All European Conference has been scheduled in February of 1987 in Sitges, Spain. The conference will be designed to bring together persons in many parts of Europe who have contacted UFMCC for information concerning affiliation.

ICM Mexico City was unable to purchase a building that had been the focus of a fund raising effort for the church's building fund. Someone else put a contract on the building and the search is on now for another location. The UFMCC church in Mexico City now has $13,000 in its building fund.

NIGERIAN CHURCHES GROW DESPITE POLITICAL STRIFE IN COUNTRY

The MCC churches in Nigeria are reported to be growing despite the fact that the country has undergone recent political upheaval.

The Reverend Sylvanus Maduka, UFMCC Extension Coordinator for Nigeria, reports that the country has undergone two military coups since Christmas.

Inflation is soaring in a country that already had been hard-hit economically.

The inability of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries to agree on lower levels for production of oil and to stop the plummeting price of oil is expected to impact the Nigerian economy dramatically. A two billion dollar shortfall is expected in foreign exchange earnings for the country this year.

The country has recently implemented 14 of 17 proposed austerity measures. Those measures had previously been rejected on the grounds that they would threaten the country's autonomy.

In this difficult environment, MCCs are reported to be growing and the ministries they provide are increasing in importance.

The Reverend Elder Jean White will travel to Nigeria with another nurse in May. The trip is possible because of a designated donation made to the UFMCC for that purpose. It is reported that the highest excitement related to the visit is in anticipation of the medical care that they will be able to provide.

BRIEF NOTES FROM SEVERAL COUNTRIES...

The Reverend Dominique Mouthe in Lyon, France, is now in contact with persons in Milan and Turin, Italy, who are interested in the ministry that he offers.

New Zealand has two new MCC study groups. The groups were started in Auckland as an extension of the main Auckland church.

Christ is Risen

EXCEL IN AUSTRALIA

Imagine conducting an EXCEL retreat weekend with flocks of wild cockatiels circling overhead and big pink spiders the size of tarantulas showing up when you least expected it. That was the scene as EXCEL was introduced in Australia in January. The group met near Sydney in a place named Toongabbie.

EXCEL is a program, usually conducted in a retreat setting, which provides an experience in Christian community living. It is based on the Catholic Cursillo movement.

The first EXCEL in Australia was called EXCEL of the South Seas and was conducted by a team of six persons from Canada and the United States. The team included Keith Apple, Ralph Wysong, Jane Sandmeier, Margeurite Scroggie, Rev. Claudia Vierra and Daryl Roberts.

Following the program a new EXCEL team was formed. To be called EXCEL OF THE SOUTH SEAS, the team hopes to conduct its first retreat in October.

In January, the temperature reached 90 degrees in Toongabbie and the weather provided a beautiful setting for the retreat. Those who attended reported that the retreat area was home to wild cockatiels, parakeets (budgies) and brilliant rainbow-colored lorikeets.

Following the retreat five members of the team attended the Australian District Conference in Adelaide where Rev. Claudia Vierra was a guest speaker and Jane Sandmeier conducted a workshop on EXCEL. The trip from Toongabbie to Adelaide was via an eighteen-hour chartered bus excursion. A number of persons from the EXCEL weekend made the trip to district conference and there were more than 60 in attendance at the conference.

NCCC/UFMCC DIALOGUE UPDATE

EDITOR'S NOTE: When the National Council of Churches of Christ voted not to take a vote on the admission of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches to membership in NCCC there was an agreement that there would be a continuing dialogue between the two groups. As Co-Director of the Department of Ecumenical Relations for UFMCC, Sandi Robinson has been actively involved in the facilitation of that dialogue. She provides Journey Magazine with the following report on the progress that has been made in that process since last October:

October 10, 1985, I visited the National Council of Churches headquarters in New York City. Within the polished marble hallways the bustle of activity reflected an international flavor and a slice of diverse humanity.Security was obvious in the Christian Church Center which houses the National Council of Churches.

My appointments were with Lois Dauway, Assistant General Secretary for Justice and Liberation; Nell Gibson, Executive Assistant to the Episcopal Bishop of New York and director of the New York Episcopal AIDS task force; Chris Cowap, director of Economic and Social Justice and the Justice for Women Working Group.

My concerns were:

•to become more familiar with the NCC

•to discuss the implications of the AIDS crisis on our denomination

•to discuss my involvement with Justice for Women

•to develop a foundation for our involvement at the November Governing Board meeting in Ft. Worth, Texas

•to discuss ways of actualizing NCCC support of UFMCC on the denomination level

There was not a little irony in the fact that the event of the day was the meeting between Lois Dauway, Nell Gibson and myself, all women of color, bringing three different perspectives to a discussion on AIDS. We talked about what UFMCC is faced with and the long term effects on the Black, Haitian and Hispanic communities from the disease.

I discovered from Chris Cowap that a meeting was planned of the Health and Welfare working group to discuss strategy on what to have ready for the May Governing Board meeting in New Orleans in reference to AIDS.

The meeting was held in January and a Task Force on AIDS was authorized to pull together educational materials on AIDS and to prepare a statement for the May Governing Board meeting. A consultant will be paid and given a budget to do this work. The candidate for this position is a friend of UFMCC who has expertise in AIDS ministry. The Task Force expects that the NCCC will call for an ecumenical day of prayer for people with AIDS.

At the November meeting of the NCCC Governing Board in Ft. Worth, Texas, the NCCC hosted an AIDS discussion. Many MCC people were present to attend that discussion, however, the NCCC staffers (supporters of UFMCC) advised us not to appear in the discussion in large numbers to prevent our denominational issues from becoming confused with AIDS. Therefore, they requested that we be represented by one MCCer. There were 21 people present, including myself, with almost as many denominations represented in that number.

National Council of Churches of Christ

Basically the discussion consisted of NCCC people processing and sharing their pain and despair of the disease that was beginning to touch and affect them personally. The most talked about problem was children with AIDS in public schools and the pain of panic reactions from society.

A United Church of Christ lay woman shared her experience that the gay males with whom she associates are exhibiting a deepening spirituality; a United Methodist clergy woman shared that the medical community has handled incurable diseases for centuries and she pointed out that AIDS is creating an irrational fear of incurable disease; a male clergy from New York stated that the slowness of Christian response is devastating.

There was deep pain and anger expressed by an Episcopal lay woman that some churches are no longer using the common cup; Lois Dauway of Justice and Liberation spoke of the extreme exploitation happening in the Haitian community—Haitain children in schools is a problem and Haitians have difficulty getting employment.

Many suggestions for action came out of the discussion:

1) Support of Senator Ted Weiss' bill, HR3602, that the 2 year eligibility requirement be dropped from Medicare for AIDS persons.

2) To issue a strong theologically based statement on AIDS by the May Governing Board meeting.

3) Development of an AIDS curriculum for campus ministries.

4) Establishment of an AIDS network

5) Counseling, education, media coverage

This group of people was committed to actualizing a healthy response to AIDS. It remains to be seen if their energy and enthusiasm will pass on to the rest of the Governing Board.

The night before the AIDS discussion, I attended the minority caucus. Arie Brower, NCCC General Secretary, was invited to give a brief statement. He indicated his openness to minority concerns and willingness to talk. After he left, the two main issues discussed were the difficulty in filling vacant NCCC jobs with qualified minority people who could move to New York City and the budgetary cuts of the Division of Justice and

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Dialogue Update

Liberation. No strong plan was developed to resolve either of these problems.

In his report from Church and Society, Director Kenyon Burke spoke at length about various issues including genetic engineering. He said that minority people should read the literature and be cautious about its implication. There was no mention of AIDS.

I was distressed and when I asked why AIDS was not discussed as a minority issue, I was advised that AIDS happens only to needle (drug) users in the Black community. I was sorry I asked. The strong curtain of denial fell and there was no more time to discuss it.

Three UFMCC churches, MCC Dallas; Mid-Cities MCC, Arlington, Texas; and Agape MCC of Ft. Worth, Texas, worked very hard together to host our day-long hospitality suite. The number of MCC Clergy and Laity present at this meeting was moving and impressive.

This Governing Board meeting had in attendance the largest representation of UFMCC since the 1983 meeting in San Francisco. There were at least 20 present during the week. The Reverend Joseph Gilbert and the Reverend Marge Perry participated with the Reverend Elder Don Eastman, myself and the Reverend Elder Nancy Wilson in the planning session of our first dialogue which will be at the May meeting in New Orleans, La. The Reverend Jo Crisco; Sandy O'Steen, the Reverend Alice Jones, Wanda Goodwin and David Anderson, Assistant District Coordinator, South Central District; and MCC'ers from the three churches attended some of the meetings and worked the hospitality suite.

Excitement was high in our hospitality suite when Letty Russell, theologian, educator, author, visited us after her presentation to the governing board for the Faith and Order Commission. As we sat at her feet, she urged us not to sit at her feet, but advised us to believe in our own visions of community and not to accept the dictations of others who cannot know us as well as we know ourselves.

The first planning meeting for our first dialogue with the NCCC began Friday afternoon at the close of the Governing Board meeting. We planned the dialogue with few problems and concluded a half day earlier than we had anticipated.

Consultation/Dialogue I will be on biblical interpretation, Consultation II on human sexuality and Consultation III on ecclesiology.

The discussion in Consultation I will focus on biblical anthropology and homosexuality and the Bible. It will last one and a half days and ideally will have at least one representative from each NCCC member communion and fifteen to twenty people (clergy/laity) to represent UFMCC.

A variety of viewpoints will be expressed with emphasis by the speakers on historical and contextual criticism. Featured speakers will include Biblical scholar Robin Scroggs, author of HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. The possibility of video taping is being explored by the NCCC staff. The report of Consultation I will be presented to the Governing Board at the November '86 meeting.

The purpose of these Consultations, which will conclude in May 1987, is study and dialogue between UFMCC and NCCC. We expect that these dialogues will provide an atmosphere of healing, enlightenment and illumination for both UFMCC and the NCCC.

NCC OFFICIALS BARRED FROM VISITING SOUTH AFRICA

By Religious News Service

NEW YORK (RNS) -- A nine-member National Council of Churches delegation has been barred from visiting South Africa.

South African officials said the church officials had links to black guerilla movements. The decision not to grant visas to the group was made by Home Affairs Minister Stoffel Botha and announced a week after a U.S. Congressional delegation that included clergy had returned home from a South Africa visit and advocated harsher economic sanctions to bring an end to apartheid.

The NCC delegation was to be led by Bishop Philip Cousin of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, president of the NCC. The group had earlier received word of a delay in their visas and was told to postpone their planned trip until the documents were issued.

The church leaders were invited to South Africa by the South African Council of Churches, which also hosted the congressional delegation.

INVESTIGATED BY THE VATICAN

Sister Jeannine Gramick SSND, PhD is a Roman Catholic Nun (School Sister of Notre Dame). She and Father Robert Nugent are co-founders of New Ways Ministries which encourages ministry to Gay and Lesbian Catholics. Despite the fact that both Sister Gramick and Father Nugent are now unable to serve on the Board of New Ways Ministries because of pressure from the official Church they continue in their ministry to Gay and Lesbian persons and in their work to further understanding of homosexuality in the Catholic community.

Journey: Please give us your description of the events that led to the departure of you and Father Robert Nugent from the Board of New Ways Ministries of which you are co-founders.

Gramick: It came about because the local bishop, Bishop James Hickey, did not agree with the approach that New Ways Ministry was taking under our direction. He felt that New Ways Ministry was ambiguous with regards to the teaching of the Church. Unfortunately we were never given an opportunity in an ecclesiastical setting to defend ourselves to refute his charge. The Vatican simply assumed that his charges were correct and did not give us an opportunity through our communities to challenge that. We felt that we were not ambiguous at all, that New Ways Ministry was very clear in articulating what the Catholic Church's formal position is on homosexual behavior. Unfortunately Archbishop Hickey narrowly construed Church teaching to be the same as its stance on homogenital behavior. We know that the Church's teachings on homosexuality is much broader than what it articulates on homogenital behavior. There is a whole body of official Church documents dealing with civil rights, dealing with prejudice against Gay people but he was not interested in that.

New Ways Ministry did adequately present the official teaching of the Church on homogenital behavior but went beyond that to include dissenting opinions of reputable theologians on homogenital behavior which differed from the official teaching of the Church.

I think that this is where his problem came in. He did not want us to present these dissenting opinions. So now New Ways Ministry, which Father Bob Nugent and I co-founded in 1977 is continuing under different administration. Technically Father Nugent and I are no longer co-directors of New Ways Ministry because of a Vatican intervention in the summer of 1984. New Ways Ministry is continuing without our being codirectors and the latest project of New Ways Ministry has been a national symposium on "Homosexuality, Priesthood and Religious Life." In November there was a big symposium in the Washington, D.C., area and in January in the San Francisco area and coming up in April in St. Louis there will be another.

Journey: What have you and Father Nugent been doing since the Vatican intervention in 1984?

Gramick: We have continued our ministry with the approval of our religious communities and with the knowledge of the Vatican, if not the willing approval. At least they are aware of our continuing in Gay ministry. We have, for the most part, been going around the country giving seminars on the topic of Homosexuality and Church Ministry. So our involvement in Gay ministry certainly hasn't diminished, but we have to do it apart from New Ways Ministry.

Journey: Is it true that you are under investigation again?

Gramick: Yes, that's right. That came about because last October we were in the state of Minnesota giving some workshops and the Catholic Bishops cancelled us out of the Catholic facilities where the seminars had been scheduled. The reason that they were cancelled by the Catholic Bishops was that they had contacted Archbishop Hickey who merely repeated his charges against us and, as I said, these charges are taken to be correct without any attempt to enable us to have a defense. None of these Bishops contacted us directly to ascertain our presentations on homosexuality and Church ministry. They just assumed that Archbishop Hickey's charges were correct and they cancelled us out of these facilities. As a result the Vatican ordered an investigation. We are hoping and are pretty confident that if we have an adequate investigation that we will be cleared. I hope that this will be done very publicly so that the blackballing that has been going on against us because of Archbishop Hickey would cease. My

provincial at present is in the process of contacting persons who have come to our seminars to get first hand information from them. Father Nugent's community is doing the same thing so that we will have an opportunity to apprise adequately our religious communities and, through them, the Vatican of what we are doing. Interestingly enough, a number of years ago my community did do an investigation and I was exonerated and my provincial at that time told the Vatican that she recommended that I continue in this work. So the only thing I can conclude is that despite her recommendation Archbishop Hickey's word, which was not substantiated, carried much more weight than my provincial's word who had directly spoken with me. It makes one wonder about the power that ecclesiastical authorities like Bishops have in regards to the lack of power that religious communities have in the Church.

Journey: How detrimental has all of this business of investigation, etc. been to your work?

Gramick: I think there have been positive and negative effects. I think a negative effect is that it has impeded our work in the sense that the Diocese and people who are more connected to the Church in an official way would be less apt to invite us to make presentations and conduct workshops. They would be more hesitant knowing that a Bishop has made these charges against us publicly. In a Diocese, then, such as Minnesota, Archbishop Hickey's action reverberated to the Minnesota Bishops. I think that was very detrimental to our work. On the other hand, the positive effect is that the notoriety and the publicity that was created enabled people to talk more about the topic of homosexuality. It raised the issue to public attention and I believe that is always a value. Once people begin to speak on the issue I think that a lot of misconceptions will be alleviated. It could spur on people to do some talking and some study on the issue.

Journey: Why do you keep on doing what you do despite the opposition you encounter?

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Journey Interviews Sister Jeannine Gramick

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Gramick: I think it is a matter of justice. I feel very strongly that the Catholic Church has a lot of reparation to make to the Lesbian and Gay community. There is a need for ministry in this particular area. Sometimes one can feel that if the authorities in charge are against something, it may be a sign of something good because you read the Gospels and see that the religious authority figures of Jesus' day were opposed to his preaching and his teaching. It gives one strength to read the scriptures and to realize that you are just following in the footsteps of Jesus. Basically, why I continue in it is that I think it is a needed ministry. I don't think that the time is over yet in the Church when we can say: "There are many people doing this ministry so my involvement is not that crucial". I think that my involvement at this point of time is crucial in the Catholic Church.

Journey: You said that the Catholic Church owes reparations to the Lesbian and Gay community, would you expand on that?

Gramick: Yes, throughout history, whether or not the Christian Church was the cause or originator of discrimination is certainly a debatable point but, at the minimum, it was certainly a conduit of discrimination. It was through the Church that persecution of Lesbian and Gay people was felt. I am not saying that the Christian Church was the sole persecutor of Lesbian and Gay people but it was certainly a prime persecutor. Because of the thousands, probably millions, of lives that were intefered with, either physically or emotionally and mentally and psychologically by the attitudes projected by the Christian Church; for these sins, I think the Christian Church must make amends.

Journey: You do a number of seminars, many of which are with persons who have very little experience in addressing the topic of homosexuality. What sort of responses do you encounter?

Gramick: Well, I have been very encouraged by the responses that we have had around the country. I think that the grass roots Catholic people are much more willing to discuss the issue than they were fifteen years ago when I first got involved. When I first was involved you would never pick up a Catholic newspaper and read that a conference was being given on homosexuality. You would never pick up a Catholic newspaper and read about a group called Dignity that was having a retreat. Now there are manny diocesan papers accross the country who would risk such activity and not only announce them, but do feature stories on them. That is an encouraging sign. The fact that we have gone all over the country and had people interested in coming to attend is a very encouraging sign. For the most part we don't meet hostile people in the workshops; we have on occassions, but most of the people who come are very sincere in wanting to learn more on this issue. I see that as a big change from ten or fifteen years ago. I am very encouraged on the grass roots level. Now, on the official level such as diocesan structures, I am not that encouraged. I don't see as much progress as I would like to see. I think that has something to do with the politics of the Roman Catholic Church at this time and this Papacy.

Journey: Recently there was a book published entitled LESBIAN NUNS BREAKING SILENCE. What has been the effect within the community of women religious within the Catholic Church as related to such open discussion of this issue?

Gramick: I think that the book overall had more of an impact on society in general than in the Catholic church. It is probably due to the fact that the Catholic media, if not intentionally, then unconsciously suppresses any awareness of the book. I saw in the Catholic print media only one review of the book and a couple of news stories on the book. It did not receive the flurry of publicity that it did in the secular media. Its effect within women religious communities, as such, has been minimal. There has been some effect because I know that some communities of women religious are now beginning to look into the issue of Lesbian nuns whereas before the book had come out they probably hadn't given it that much thought. So, there has been some effect, and I would say a positive one, of women communities trying to be supportive and understanding of the Lesbian women within their congregation. I really wouldn't want to overemphasize the impace of the book because it really has not had a great impact.

Journey: What message would you send to persons in the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches?

Gramick: I think the message I would send is that God loves everyone. Particularly, I think God has a special place in the heart for persons whom society oppresses or doesn't understand. I think God loves Lesbian and Gay people in a very unique and very special way. Also I would say that many people within "mainline" religions are very bigoted and I would hope that the prejudice and the bigotry that is expressed by perhaps even officials of "mainline" churches would not be too upsetting or too alienating. I think that is to be expected and we should not equate religion with the prejudice that we find among some leaders in religion. Try to withstand some of the rejection that seems to be coming from "mainline" churches. That rejection is due to prejudice and has nothing to do with God. It is very ungodly.

CONVOCATIONS ON RACISM ANNOUNCED

WASHINGTON (United Methodist News Service)--Convocations to examine ways "personal" and "institutional" racism, especially "white racism," affect the "lives of millions of people throughout the globe" today will be held across the United Methodist Church in the autumn of 1987.

The meetings, ordered by the 1984 General Conference, will be co-sponsored by the Council of Bishops and the Commission on Religion and Race, which has its headquarters here. A national gathering to be attended by an expected 700 persons will be held Sept. 13-16, 1987, at a site yet to be chosen, and meetings in each of the church's five U.S. JURISDICTIONS WILL BE HELD LATER IN THE YEAR.

ISSUES OF INTEREST FROM OTHER DENOMINATIONS

CALIFORNIA PASTOR'S REMARKS ON SEX CAUSE LOSS OF BAPTIST SUPPORT

s News Service

)RK (RNS) -- A Southern gregation in San Fran- st its mission support from ist convention following its ertion that the Bible has no c."

ement also led to the the Rev. James Lowder of persons available for work in a supervised rogram sponsored by ate Baptist Theological Mill Valley.

vder, 39, is pastor of eet Baptist Church in San The congregation, which 50 active members, had ving $14,969 in special from the California state convention for programs aiding senior citizens and refugees, a mental-health program and a shelter for the homeless.

in a television talk show aired in November, Mr. Lowder stated that he does not believe "that the Bible has a sexual ethic." He affirmed that "it has an ethic of human relationships that are faithful, loving, life-enhancing and caring. If a gay relationship has those qualifites, then I believe the Bible affirms that relationship."

in a telephone interview, Mr. Lowder told RNS that he was "extremely disappointed and saddened" at the cutoff of funds from the state convention. "No one came to see us with the charges that were made by the convention," he said. "The decision was made unilaterally. We were not involved in the decision at all."

RNS was unable to reach any officials at the state convention for comment on the matter.

Mr. Lowder also expressed concern that the action was taken against the congregation for statements he had made. "We as a congregation do not have any fixed policy about homosexuality," he said.

The pastor said he suspects that there are "at least a million Southern Baptists around the denomination who are gay." He said he hoped that the controversy "will be a sign of hope" in that he spoke out on the issue despite the consequences.

This was not the first time Mr. Lowder's position on a controversial issue has gotten him in trouble with a Southern Baptist agency. The denomination's Home Mission Board, which had been giving financial support to his church three years ago, reprimanded him in 1983 when he and his wife and nine other members of the Dolores Street Church were arrested during an anti-nuclear protest. The demonstrators were rebuked for identifying themselves as part of the Southern Baptist Convention when they were arrested.

Bob Cate, dean of the Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, wrote to several California pastors, directors of associational missions and state convention officials informing them that Mr. Lowder's name had been taken off the list of pastors available to supervise small groups in the seminary's supervised ministry program because "The Bible does not allow homosexuality as an acceptable lifestyle."

The Rev. Frank Pollard, seminary president, told RNS that he supported Dean Cate's action because it reflected policy set by the seminary trustees. He said it was "a very stringent kind of action," but maintained that "my hands were tied" because of the trustees' policy.

Dr. Pollard insisted that the removal of Mr. Lowder's name from the list "was not condemning him in any way," and asserted that "we're not accusing Mr. Lowder of being anything other than a very concerned, compassionate minister."

SOUTHERN BAPTIST PRESIDENT SAYS AIDS SHOWS GOD'S DISPLEASURE

By Religious News Service

SAN JOSE, Calif. (RNS)--The president of the Southern Baptist Convention condemned homosexuality as a "sinful lifestyle" and said AIDS "is God indicating his displeasure" toward it. He made the comments in an interview with the San Francisco Examiner while attending an evengelism conference here.

The Rev. Charles Stanley, pastor of Atlanta's First Baptist Church, told the newspaper that homosexuality "is a sinful lifestyle, according to Scripture." He expressed the belief that AIDS "Is God indicating His displeasure and his attitude toward that form of lifestyle, which we in this country are about to accept."

Dr. Stanley expressed dismay at the publicity given to the death of actor Rock Hudson from AIDS. "It's almost as if he's become more heroic dying of AIDS, with all the publicity he's gotten," the Southern Baptist leader said. "It's like there was nothing bad about it."

While criticizing the increasing acceptance of homosexuality, Dr. Stanley said that homosexuals need help to be "delivered from the bondage" of their lifestyle.

Jack Pantaleo, co-director of San Francisco's AIDS Interfaith Network, said he was appalled at Dr. Stanley's remarks. He charged that "people who say AIDS is God's wrath are using it to condone hate and to keep Gay men at a distance."

Mr. Pantaleo said that "AIDS has nothing to do with sexuality, politics or morality. AIDS has everything to do with biology. There's a nasty bug around."

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Gramick: I think it is a matter of justice. I feel very strongly that the Catholic Church has a lot of reparation to make to the Lesbian and Gay community. There is a need for ministry in this particular area. Sometimes one can feel that if the authorities in charge are against something, it may be a sign of something good because you read the Gospels and see that the religious authority figures of Jesus' day were opposed to his preaching and his teaching. It gives one strength to read the scriptures and to realize that you are just following in the footsteps of Jesus. Basically, why I continue in it is that I think it is a needed ministry. I don't think that the time is over yet in the Church when we can say: "There are many people doing this ministry so my involvement is not that crucial". I think that my involvement at this point of time is crucial in the Catholic Church.

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Gramick: Yes, throughout history, whether or not the Christian Church was the cause or originator of discrimination is certainly a debatable point but, at the minimum, it was certainly a conduit of discrimination. It was through the Church that persecution of Lesbian and Gay people was felt. I am not saying that the Christian Church was the sole persecutor of Lesbian and Gay people but it was certainly a prime persecutor. Because of the thousands, probably millions, of lives that were intefered with, either physically or emotionally and mentally and psychologically by the attitudes projected by the Christian Church; for these sins, I think the Christian Church must make amends.

Journey: You do a number of seminars, many of which are with persons who have very little experience in addressing the topic of homosexuality. What sort of responses do you encounter?

Gramick: Well, I have been very encouraged by the responses that we have had around the country. I think that the grass roots Catholic people are much more willing to discuss the issue than they were fifteen years ago when I first got involved. When I first was involved you would never pick up a Catholic newspaper and read that a conference was being given on homosexuality. You would never pick up a Catholic newspaper and read about a group called Dignity that was having a retreat. Now there are manny diocesan papers accross the country who would risk such activity and not only announce them, but do feature stories on them. That is an encouraging sign. The fact that we have gone all over the country and had people interested in coming to attend is a very encouraging sign. For the most part we don't meet hostile people in the workshops; we have on occassions, but most of the people who come are very sincere in wanting to learn more on this issue. I see that as a big change from ten or fifteen years ago. I am very encouraged on the grass roots level. Now, on the official level such as diocesan structures, I am not that encouraged. I don't see as much progress as I would like to see. I think that has something to do with the politics of the Roman Catholic Church at this time and this Papacy.

Journey: Recently there was a book published entitled LESBIAN NUNS BREAKING SILENCE. What has been the effect within the community of women religious within the Catholic Church as related to such open discussion of this issue?

Gramick: I think that the book overall had more of an impact on society in general than in the Catholic church. It is probably due to the fact that the Catholic media, if not intentionally, then unconsciously suppresses any awareness of the book. I saw in the Catholic print media only one review of the book and a couple of news stories on the book. It did not receive the flurry of publicity that it did in the secular media. Its effect within women religious communities, as such, has been minimal. There has been some effect because I know that some communities of women religious are now beginning to look into the issue of Lesbian nuns whereas before the book had come out they probably hadn't given it that much thought. So, there has been some effect, and I would say a positive one, of women communities trying to be supportive and understanding of the Lesbian women within their congregation. I really wouldn't want to overemphasize the impace of the book because it really has not had a great impact.

Journey: What message
send to persons in the
Fellowship of Metropol
munity Churches?

Gramick: I think the
would send is that
everyone. Particularly, I
has a special place in the h
sons whom society op
doesn't understand. I think
Lesbian and Gay people
unique and very special
would say that many pe
"mainline" religions are v
and I would hope that th
and the bigotry that is ex
perhaps even officials of
churches would not be to
or too alienating. I think t
expected and we should
religion with the prejudice t
among some leaders in religion. Try to
withstand some of the rejection that seems to be coming from "mainline" churches. That rejection is due to prejudice and has nothing to do with God. It is very ungodly.

CONVOCATIONS ON RACISM ANNOUNCED

WASHINGTON (United Methodist News Service)--Convocations to examine ways "personal" and "institutional" racism, especially "white racism," affect the "lives of millions of people throughout the globe" today will be held across the United Methodist Church in the autumn of 1987.

The meetings, ordered by the 1984 General Conference, will be co-sponsored by the Council of Bishops and the Commission on Religion and Race, which has its headquarters here. A national gathering to be attended by an expected 700 persons will be held Sept. 13-16, 1987, at a site yet to be chosen, and meetings in each of the church's five U.S. JURISDICTIONS WILL BE HELD LATER IN THE YEAR.

ISSUES OF INTEREST FROM OTHER DENOMINATIONS

CALIFORNIA PASTOR'S REMARKS ON SEX CAUSE LOSS OF BAPTIST SUPPORT

By Religious News Service

NEW YORK (RNS) -- A Southern Baptist congregation in San Francisco has lost its mission support from a state Baptist convention following its pastor's assertion that the Bible has no "sexual ethic."

The statement also led to the removal of the Rev. James Lowder from a list of persons available for volunteer work in a supervised ministry program sponsored by Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley.

Mr. Lowder, 39, is pastor of Dolores Street Baptist Church in San Francisco. The congregation, which has about 50 active members, had been receiving $14,969 in special assistance from the California state Baptist convention for programs aiding senior citizens and refugees, a mental-health program and a shelter for the homeless.

in a television talk show aired in November, Mr. Lowder stated that he does not believe "that the Bible has a sexual ethic." He affirmed that "it has an ethic of human relationships that are faithful, loving, life-enhancing and caring. If a gay relationship has those qualifites, then I believe the Bible affirms that relationship."

in a telephone interview, Mr. Lowder told RNS that he was "extremely disappointed and saddened" at the cutoff of funds from the state convention. "No one came to see us with the charges that were made by the convention," he said. "The decision was made unilaterally. We were not involved in the decision at all."

RNS was unable to reach any officials at the state convention for comment on the matter.

Mr. Lowder also expressed concern that the action was taken against the congregation for statements he had made. "We as a congregation do not have any fixed policy about homosexuality," he said.

The pastor said he suspects that there are "at least a million Southern Baptists around the denomination who are gay." He said he hoped that the controversy "will be a sign of hope" in that he spoke out on the issue despite the consequences.

This was not the first time Mr. Lowder's position on a controversial issue has gotten him in trouble with a Southern Baptist agency. The denomination's Home Mission Board, which had been giving financial support to his church three years ago, reprimanded him in 1983 when he and his wife and nine other members of the Dolores Street Church were arrested during an anti-nuclear protest. The demonstrators were rebuked for identifying themselves as part of the Southern Baptist Convention when they were arrested.

Bob Cate, dean of the Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, wrote to several California pastors, directors of associational missions and state convention officials informing them that Mr. Lowder's name had been taken off the list of pastors available to supervise small groups in the seminary's supervised ministry program because "The Bible does not allow homosexuality as an acceptable lifestyle."

The Rev. Frank Pollard, seminary president, told RNS that he supported Dean Cate's action because it reflected policy set by the seminary trustees. He said it was "a very stringent kind of action," but maintained that "my hands were tied" because of the trustees' policy.

Dr. Pollard insisted that the removal of Mr. Lowder's name from the list "was not condemning him in any way," and asserted that "we're not accusing Mr. Lowder of being anything other than a very concerned, compassionate minister."

SOUTHERN BAPTIST PRESIDENT SAYS AIDS SHOWS GOD'S DISPLEASURE

By Religious News Service

SAN JOSE, Calif. (RNS)--The president of the Southern Baptist Convention condemned homosexuality as a "sinful lifestyle" and said AIDS "is God indicating his displeasure" toward it. He made the comments in an interview with the San Francisco Examiner while attending an evengelism conference here.

The Rev. Charles Stanley, pastor of Atlanta's First Baptist Church, told the newspaper that homosexuality "is a sinful lifestyle, according to Scripture." He expressed the belief that AIDS "Is God indicating His displeasure and his attitude toward that form of lifestyle, which we in this country are about to accept."

Dr. Stanley expressed dismay at the publicity given to the death of actor Rock Hudson from AIDS. "It's almost as if he's become more heroic dying of AIDS, with all the publicity he's gotten," the Southern Baptist leader said. "It's like there was nothing bad about it."

While criticizing the increasing acceptance of homosexuality, Dr. Stanley said that homosexuals need help to be "delivered from the bondage" of their lifestyle.

Jack Pantaleo, co-director of San Francisco's AIDS Interfaith Network, said he was appalled at Dr. Stanley's remarks. He charged that "people who say AIDS is God's wrath are using it to condone hate and to keep Gay men at a distance."

Mr. Pantaleo said that "AIDS has nothing to do with sexuality, politics or morality. AIDS has everything to do with biology. There's a nasty bug around."

cont. from page 4

PULPIT TO POLITICS

project and the lesbians who have rallied around their gay brothers and offered them support I am enormously proud of our community. I guess what we are into now is evangelism, folks. It is not in the sense of trying to make other people like us. That is a misunderstanding of evangelism you get from everybody; that somehow, until the mission field looks exactly like the church back home, you haven't succeeded. Evangelism is communicating truth. Evangelism is presenting reality to people. Evangelism is offering faith to people and offering them the acceptance of their history as we have accepted ours. Right now the world needs that very, very badly. I don't know why I'm up here telling you people anything at all about faith; anybody who's worn a collar in the name of MCC knows an awful lot about courage and an awful lot about evangelism. You're going to find continually that people are a little afraid to deal with us and fear, whatever denominational background you come from, is not good. Fear is the thing that prevents humanness from manifesting itself and evangelism in a large part means overcoming fear. We happen, I think,...to live in a country that is in terrible fear of losing its masculinity right now and whether we are a lesbian or a gay man, we are extraordinarily threatening to people who believe in man on top and woman on bottom.

The fundamental offering that we have of sexual naturalness, of an end to the perversity of defining human beings in terms of their gender in a way that is inhibitive to natural humanness is a special part of the evangelism that we have to do in this society. If we can accept this in ourselves and destroy the last vestige of our own upbringing which caused men to want to deal with women in a certain way and caused women to resist roles of power and assertiveness in our culture, we have a message this country absolutely must hear if they are going to survive into the next century without global conflict.

I think that you in the Metropolitan Community Church are singularly well located, because so early on you saw in the gay experience something so fundamental to your experience as believers. I think you know what it is to say, "Here is my experience as a lesbian or a gay man and this discloses humanness to you, whether you are gay or straight or whatever your history may be." Our faith as gay people means nothing unless it is a faith that communicates humanness to non-gay people. I believe that it does, and I believe that the world needs a great big dose of the kind of hugging and loving and touching and being together and caring for one another that we have found in the lesbian/gay community. I salute you...and I hope that you will not underestimate the power that is in this room. It is a power of truth that is present whenever human beings come together in honesty. I hope you will join a whole host of other lesbians and gay men who are taking this truth into the corridors of political power, into the business world, into the arts, into the places where our culture is being shaped and the future is being formed. We look to you as real leaders because we know that you understand what the real meaning of our history is.

Mother Teresa Asked to Open AIDS Hospice in Los Angeles

By Religious News Service

LOS ANGELES (RNS)--Roman Catholic Archbishop Roger Mahony, saying the church is obliged to provide care and compassion, has asked Mother Teresa to establish a hospice for dying AIDS patients in Los Angeles.

"We have the duty to help relieve what physical and psychological suffering can be relieved by sharing in the medical, social and overall sustenance of those afflicted, particularly those needing shelter and unable to work," he said. Archbishop Mahony said the hospice would not be limited to Catholic patients. "I would think the hospice should serve victims of any faith or belief," he said. The Los Angeles prelate spoke Feb. 2 at the conclusion of a 40-hour prayer vigil for AIDS sufferers held in a Hollywood church. In his talk, Archbishop Mahony also outlined a series of steps designed to improve relations between the church and the local gay community.

They included setting up a series of workshops for archdiocesan priests to sensitize them to the needs of gays and assigning a group of priests to "take special pastoral responsibility" for AIDS sufferers.

Archbishop Mahony used the term "gay Catholics" in his talk rather than homosexuals. Gay activists among the 1,000 worshipers attending the mass said his use of the term broke new ground in local church attitudes.

"He showed great courage in just using that expression to talk to us," said James Highland of the local chapter of Dignity, an organization of gay and lesbian practicing Catholics.

Morris Knight, a leading Los Angeles gay activist, jumped to his feet following the archbishop's talk and said, "This is awesome, simply awesome."

Others in the audience wept softly and whispered the names of friends or loved ones who had died of AIDS. With 1,260 reported cases as of December, Los Angeles County has the third-highest number of AIDS victims in the nation, following New York and San Francisco. More than half of those locally suffering from the disease have died.

Despite his sympathetic words, Archbishop Mahony also urged gay Catholics to lead chaste lives in accordance with official church teachings that also apply to unmarried heterosexuals. The archbishop, who has become a leading figure on a variety of social issues in Los Angeles since taking over the reins of the archdiocese last September, gave few details about the hospice proposal. He said those particulars would be worked out with the Nobel Prize-winning nun when she visits Los Angeles in May.

Last month, Mother Teresa's missionaries opened a small hospice in New York's Greenwich Village, which immediately took in 14 dying AIDS victims. Mother Teresa's order is also in the process of opening an AIDS hospice in San Francisco.

ISSUES OF INTEREST FROM OTHER DENOMINATIONS

Church Drops Charges Against Gay Colorado Cleric

By Virginia Culver Correspondent
Religious News Service

DENVER (RNS) -- Charges against the Rev. Julian Rush, a gay United Methodist minister, have been dropped, and Mr. Rush will continue as associate pastor of St. Paul's United Methodist Church in downtown Denver.

A regional board of ordained ministers decided after a six-hour meeting Feb. 18 that Mr. Rush, 49, does not fit the definition of a "self-avowed practicing homosexual."

Persons fitting that description have been declared ineligible for the ordained ministry of the 9.4-million-member denomination. The ministry board Jan. 28 approved a definition of a "self-avowed practicing homosexual" as anyone "who engages in, and openly acknowledges, genital sexual behavior with a person or persons of the same sex."

Mr. Rush met with the ministry board Feb. 18 and read a statement saying he would not answer any questions on whether he is a self-avowed practicing homosexual "because to do so would be a violation of my personal life."

Mr. Rush said he is "really pleased" with the board's decision but he doesn't believe the issue of gay ministers has been finally settled. He said earlier he was willing to "play it out" and continue his battle to stay in the ministry even if it meant a church trial.

The board could have recommended Mr. Rush's dismissal from the ministry, or it could have started the process leading to a church trial.

Mr. Rush, a minister for almost 20 years, has been the focus of national church attention since 1981, when he acknowledged his homosexuality. But the issue became crucial in 1984 when the national church passed a strict prohibition against self-avowed practicing homosexuals in the ministry. The church's supreme court subsequently ruled that "due process" had to be followed in withdrawing the credentials of any ordained minister.

Two Colorado ministers filed charges against Mr. Rush last summer, saying he should be removed from the ministry because of newspaper articles about his personal life. But the ministry board decided Jan. 18 that nothing Mr. Rush has said--and nothing that has been written about him--indicates that he engages in genital sexual behavior.

Church law states also that ministers should practice "fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness."

The Rev. Keith Watson of Sterling, Colo., chairman of the ministry board, said Mr. Rush assured the board that he intends to uphold church law.

Mr. Watson said the board will probably face criticism for the Rush decision, but added, "We looked at the case squarely; we did the best we could, based on the definition."

Dr. Edward Everding, professor at Iliff School of Theology and a member of the ministry board, said the board probably will get heat for the decision, but "no heat, no light, no illumination."

Both Mr. Watson and Mr. Rush said new charges could be filed against Mr. Rush, but for now the case is closed.

Text of the Statement of the Reverend Julian Rush

When the recent definition of "self-avowed practicing homosexual" was accepted by the conference, inherent in that report was a significant idea—no one's personal life should be subject to public scrutiny.

Such an understanding is not just central to personal privacy but to the preservation of a community of trust as well.

Now I am being asked to state whether I am or am not a self-avowed practicing homosexual.

My response to the question can be neither yes or no, for to answer at all would be a violation of my personal life, which I will not allow to be invaded. I have been invaded enough.

I have been forced to seek financial security outside the institutional walls because there was no alternative. I have had to start my professional life all over again. After almost 20 years of ministry, years of responsible service without scandal, there is no full-time place for me within the church.

In a conference where the presiding powers have been consistently supportive of my cause, there is no full-time place in the church.

In spite of the fact that I am currently engaged in a ministry of vital importance with the Colorado AIDS Project, there is still no full-time place for me in the church.

There are many within the church who believe I am unworthy simply because I happen to be a gay man, but there are also those, and a formidable group it is, who feel that I pose too great a risk economically. To accept me would cause more people to leave the church or to withhold funds.

The church has continued to search for a final solution, a satisfactory compromise, and the dust stirred by such activity has settled around the issue of celibacy. But even that has turned out to be a noisy gong, a clanging cymbal, because the real issue is not celibacy at all but the fact that to be Gay or Lesbian is to be expendable, unacceptable and unworthy.

If I cannot be acceptable to the church as a sexual being, then I cannot be acceptable to the church as a total human being, and if I cannot be considered worthy of ministry because of my sexuality, in whatever dimension that might be manifest, then how can I or any other Gay man or Lesbian be worthy of church fellowship at all?

To say I am acceptable as to who I am, as long as I do not act upon who I am, is more than a contradiction; it is the very worst of rejections.

Am I a self-avowed practicing homosexual?

I decline to answer that question because I believe that I am a person of worth who deserves the same rights of privacy as anyone else.

We so easily give lip service to human justice, reconciliation and unconditional love, but I and thousands of Gay men and Lesbians hope for a day when those words will apply even to us.

ISSUES OF INTEREST FROM OTHER DENOMINATIONS

LUTHERAN GUIDELINES WARN AGAINST THEOLOGICALLY FLAWED LANGUAGE

By Religious News Service

NEW YORK (RNS) -- The notion that donors of aid are morally superior to recipients is "theologically flawed," and churches should avoid using words and pictures in their charitable appeals that "foster a subtle arrogance, paternalism or materialism," says a new Lutheran publication on avoiding bias in language.

The authors of "Guidelines for Inclusive Language," a 10-page booklet published by the Lutheran Church in America's communications office, suggest that writers, speakers and illustrators should take care to "avoid the impression that the recipient somehow lacks full humanity without the largesse of the donor; or that the donor becomes more favored in the sight of God just for exercising basic charity."

The booklet terms such assumptions a "material bias." Its 40 guidelines also offer suggestions for eliminating sexual, racial, ethnic, religious and physical bias from writing and speech.

Charles Austin, the New York-based Lutheran denomination's director of news and information, who edited the booklet, said the new publication is the third edition of the guidelines. They were published primarily for the use of writers, editors and illustrators of Lutheran publications, but limited quantities are available free to others who request them.

Because Christians are nurtured in societies that have excluded some groups, they "do not automatically choose the most humane ways of writing or speaking," says the booklet. "This unthinking use of language is a special risk when writing or speaking of persons belonging to groups other than our own."

But the authors say that language, like politics, "lies within the realm of the kingdom of this world,' with all its imperfections." the booklet's purpose, they say, is to help users of language "be more accurate, humane and inclusive."

Among specific recommendations:

—"Don't assign emotional or moral roles exclusively to one sex. Both men and women may need care and protection; both can be spiritually and morally strong; both can be competent and independent."

—"Many find the term 'lady' condescending when used generically. 'Feminist' may be taking on connotations unacceptable to many advocating equal participation and justice for women."

—"Views on language about God...are rapidly changing. While some changes satisfy, some presently give offense; and writers and speakers should be sensitive to the concerns of their readers and audiences."

—"Current usage is 'gay' for male homosexuals, 'lesbian' for female homosexuals and 'homosexuals FOR BOTH. Even if the writer or speaker does not condone homosexuality, language used should not dehumanize or vilify persons."

"Guidelines for Inclusive Language" offers suggestions for eliminating sexual, racial, ethnic, religious and physical bias from writing and speech

—"Avoid tokenism, particularly in pictures or illustrations. Characters should be drawn as individuals. They can be shown with physical characteristics of their race; not simply as Caucasians with colored skin."

—"Avoid 'civilized' and 'uncivilized' or 'primitive' in international references, since the terms pass judgement on cultures which may be thousands of years older than the writer's own."

—"Think what it would do to a black child to be bombarded with images of white a beautiful or clean or pure or virtuous and black as dirty and menacing. It is equally unproductive to create guilt in the mind of the socially-concerned white middle-class youth by insisting that he or she is one of the 'oppressors' or 'the focus of evil.'"

—"Be alert to changes in place names, political boundaries, and regions where the political destiny is as yet unclear. The West Bank of the Jordan River is presently under Israel's control, though disputed. South Afirca still controls South-West Africa, though common usage now assigns the name Namibia to that region."

—"Avoid terms like 'our mission fields' or other language which implies that North Americans or Europeans 'own and operate' churches in other lands. The terms 'mission' and 'missionaries' are acceptable and not necessarily colonialist, but become so when linked with phrases such as 'mother church' and 'native church.'"

—"Beware of stereotyping all Muslims as Shi'ites or all Shi'ites as Islamic fundamentalists. Not all Hindus are vegetarians, not all Baptists are biblical literalists, not all Episcopalians are wealthy."

—"Avoid outmoded terminology and spellings. Currently 'Muslim' is preffered to 'Moslem,' 'Islam' to Mohammedanism, 'Muhammad' rather than 'Mohammed' and 'Qu'ran' rather than 'Koran,' though the latter is still in wide use."

—"Be careful in using references to New Testament Jews. There is a long history of bias in Christianity which blames Jews for the death of Jesus and for the persecution of the early church."

—"Native American religions, which have sacred objects and places and doctrines, deserve the same respect as other world religions. The religious beliefs of American Indians should not be seen only as an adjunct to making war or as quaint customs."

—"In Christian usage, avoid implying a 'hierarchy' of grace when referring to clergy and laity."

—"Emphasize abilities by saying that a person 'uses a wheelchair,' rather than point out that a person is 'confined to a wheelchair.' It is better to say a person 'walks with crutches' that to call them 'cripples,' to say that they are 'partially sighted' rather than 'partically blind.'"

—"A 'congenital disability' is one that has existed from birth. 'Birth defect' is not an appropriate term."

ISSUES OF INTEREST FROM OTHER DENOMINATIONS

EDITOR SAYS RUNNING "GAY" AD A MISTAKE

NEW YORK (United Methodist News Service) -- Spurgeon M. Dunnam III, editor of UNITED METHODIST REPORTER, said he decided to discontinue a classified ad for Affirmation, the gay-lesbian caucus within United Methodism, because he recognized he had made a "mistake" in interpreting the REPORTER's advertising policy when he accepted the ad over a year ago.

In 1979 the board of the weekly newspaper, published in Dallas, Texas, agreed it would not accept ads for products or services "at odds with the United Methodist Church' Social Principles."

The Social Principles say, "homosexual persons no less than heterosexual persons are individuals of sacred worth," although "we do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching."

The paid ad said: "Gay and Lesbian United Methodists--it's time for Affirmation. Write P.O. Box 1021, Evanston, Ill. 60204." Mr. Dunnam denied his action was a result of "homophobia," as charged by Affirmation spokespersons Mary L. Gaddis of Holy City, Calif., and the Rev. Morris Floyd, Minneapolis, Minn.

"That is a catch-all accusation Affirmation levels against anybody who doesn't support its cause," Mr. Dunnam said. "I've been called a lot of names in the past year," he added, "because I defended the running of their ad."

In a news release sent to the press, Affirmation spokespersons charged the newspaper editor with "capitulation" to reader opposition.Mr. Dunnam said he had not capitulated to anyone. "If anyone had read the stack of letters we sent out defending the running of the ad, they would find it very difficult to accuse us of capitulation. I made a mistake," he acknowledged.

Affirmation termed the REPORTER' s failure to seek the group's reaction for a news story about the decision "the most recent example" of "a long-standing editorial practice of ignoring the positions and work of Affirmation."

UNITED METHODIST REPORTER

Discontinues Affirmation Classified Ad

Mr. Dunnam was unable to tell United Methodist News Service how many complaints the REPORTER received about the Affirmation ad. He said negative responses started almost as soon as the ad began to be run in the Fall of 1984 and did not abate while he was in Africa on a six-month sabbatical. He said he did not think any one source was behind the complaints.

In a letter to Affirmation in mid-November explaining the ad was being discontinued, the editor noted reader objections to the content of materials sent to those who responded to the ad. He said the materials were "not primarily pastoral in nature" but advocated a viewpoint.

Asked what he found offensive about the materials, Mr. Dunnam told UMNS they contained four-letter words, "amoral ideas" and representation of "a totally permissive attitude toward sexual expression." He added, "I wouldn't want my children to be soliciting information of this sort. If one of our children was having a sexual identity crisis, I don't consider the help offered here what I would want them to have--someone telling them to adopt a particular lifestyle."

Replying to the Dunnam letter, Affirmation spokespersons contended the only four-letter words in the material were in quotations from a person diagnosed as having AIDS. They felt the language was "authentic to the situation" and saw no reason to censor it.

Ms. Gaddis and Mr. Floyd acknowledge theirs is an advocacy group. However, their letter to Mr. Dunnam said, "We have not advocated that persons should be gay or lesbian necessarily. We have urged that persons be whole and healthy, acknowledging who they are."

The lesbian-gay caucus contends REPORTER readers will be "most affected. We know of at least two suicides that were prevented because that little ad let someone know they were not 'the only one'; that there was someone to turn to for support and affirmation."

Asked to comment, Mr. Dunnam said, "IF someone was saved, I'm glad. You could question how many others were harmed."

If you think more people should read JOURNEY

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We're convinced that thousands of Christians throughout the world are looking for the kind of thought-provoking information, news, and spiritual insight JOURNEY offers each quarter.

JOURNEY will inform, entertain, and uplift you...Share this copy with people you know, or better yet, guide their journey of faith with an annual subscription. Help the message of UFMCC reach everyone who can benefit from a greater understanding of the mission of the denomination and the day to day activities of Gay and Lesbian Christians.

"Look at the Metropolitan Community Church today—the Gay Church—almost accepted into the World Council...National Council of Churches. Almost. The vote was against them. But they will try again and again until they get in. And the tragedy is that they would get one vote. Because they are spoken of here in Jude as being brute beasts—that is going to the baser lust of the flesh to live immorally and so Jude describes this as apostasy. Thank God this vile and satanic system will one day be utterly annihilated and there will be a celebration in heaven."

From a Sermon on the TV Program "old Time Gospel Hour" by Rev. Jerry Falwell, President, Moral Majority.

No, Jerry, that's not what Metropolitan Community Church is like because:

We are a caring, loving group of people.

We have created a 60-minute television documentary to confront those kind of lies, and others made by people like you who preach that we, as Lesbians and Gay males are brute beasts, not people.

Our documentary portrays the lives of women and men in the Gay community praying for and struggling to secure freedom and liberation for all people...teachers...Cuban Refugees...Third World People...persons with AIDS...Gay parents...the churched and unchurched...youth and seniors...sisters and brothers around the world who seek peace and prosperity. We have shared on tape the truth that spirituality and sexuality are compatible.

Mr. Falwell, I am asking my friends for help to show it like it is. I am asking them to please send their tax-deductible donations to me to get this message on the air. And it will be on the air because my friends care.

GOD, GAYS & THE GOSPEL: This is OUR story.

A television presentation of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches.

YES! I would like to answer Jerry!

- ☐ AN ENABLER: Minimum donation of $50.00 per year.
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- ☐ I cannot join at this time, but keep me on your mailing list.
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